The Professional

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The Professional

by SovranoPierrot

Summary

Will sighs heavily, locking the door's deadbolt before taking a few steps away as he rubs the back of his neck, thinking over everything he just witnessed. The kid's clearly getting abused, and his father is stealing from the dealers he's holding for. It's bound to end up messy. The kid will probably end up dying in the crossfire…

Will puts his hands on his hips while biting the inside of his lip as he looks at the ceiling for a moment, before sighing heavily again with a shake of his head. He ultimately decides that it's none of his business.

It's probably for the best if the kid ends up dead, anyway.

(SLOW UPDATES)

Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"How've you been feeling?" The older man asks with a smile that doesn't quite reach his dark brown eyes as he pours a small glass of milk for the younger man sitting across from him before placing it in front of the man. It's only six in the morning, but he pours himself two fingers of whiskey over ice. Hair of the dog that bit you, or something like that.

He notices the blue eyed man pursing his lips while quietly watching him pour the whiskey, knowing the younger man wants to ask for a glass. Then again, the older man also knows the brunette is a recovering alcoholic, and he's not about to start sabotaging his best man now.

"Good," the younger man says gruffly, his sharp blue eyes looking up at the older man from behind his glasses, folding his arms on the table.

The older man huffs out a laugh as he caps the whiskey bottle then places it down, playfully raising his hands in surrender as he wears another empty smile, "Alright, alright. Down to business it is."

His smile falls from his face as he slides a large photograph of a nervous looking man across the table, the younger man looking down at the photograph cautiously, "Frederick Chilton. He's trying to move in on Gideon's business. Now, we both know Gideon is a cheerful, reasonable fellow. He just wants… A little conversation."

The blue eyed man looks up to him with a raised brow as the older man continues, "But Chilton doesn't want to listen to Gideon. Maybe he'll listen to you. He comes to town every Tuesday, are you free this Tuesday?"

The blue eyed nods once, saying quietly, "Yeah. I'm free Tuesday."

The older man smiles again, looking pleased this time, as the younger man drinks his glass of milk. The brunette then takes the photograph and slips it into his pocket as he stands. He knows any crucial details he may need, like addresses or specific expectations, will be written on the back.

"See you later, Jack," the younger man says as he clasps the older man on the shoulder while walking past.

"Don't be a stranger, Will," the older man calls over his shoulder before throwing back his whiskey.

Will walks out the door of the office, into the empty jazz club. Will walks past the stage, the tables with their chairs flipped on top, the bar with their stools flipped on top. He walks out the front door, which has a keypad lock for the deadbolt. He sets the lock and is on his way,

wondering how he's going to keep himself busy for two whole days until Tuesday, knowing planning rarely takes him more than half a day.

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"Hey, uh, boss. There's a guy down here that wants to talk to you," a static voice comes out from the radio that's sitting on the nightstand to Chilton's left. It sounds like it's his lackey Mike who he had stationed down at the condominium's fire escape exit, around the back of the building.

Chilton groans in annoyance as he rolls over in his bed to grab the radio, his skinny red-headed lady friend still laying in bed next to him. The brunette holds the call button and replies, "Well, what does he look like?"

"He, uh, he looks pretty serious," the man says nervously. There's a long pause before the man continues, "He says he's coming up."

The muffled bang of a gun with a silencer echoes out from the radio before the radio goes silent once again. Chilton's green eyes widen as he jumps out of the bed, quickly pulling his tailored dress shirt and suit back on before rushing out of the room.

"Boss! Did you hear Mike on the radio?" One of his lackeys in the heart of the condo asks as the other three anxiously check their guns, the room having heard Chilton and Mike's conversation on their own radio.

Chilton huffs as he bends down and quickly laces his black Louis Vuitton dress shoes, "Eric, if you heard ME on the radio, don't you think I heard Mike on the radio?"

The other man stutters awkwardly for a moment before Chilton stands and pulls his own gun out of his suit jacket pocket then shoos all four men off, "Go on then! Figure out what this guy wants."

The men quickly nod, leaving Chilton to pace nervously in the condo as several handguns, a stacks of money, and two kilos of packed heroin and cocaine each lay on the table.

In the hall, Chilton's men watch the elevator anxiously as the numbers above it light up one by one until it reaches the penthouse suite. When the doors open, they blindly start shooting at the figure standing inside, causing Chilton to quickly come out of the condo.

"Stop firing, you idiots!" He shouts after realizing the body in the elevator wasn't dropping, the men quickly obeying. Chilton jogs over to look, then rubs his mouth with his free hand when he sees the body in the elevator is Mike, strung up to stand with deep sea fishing line like some kind of macabre puppet.

Chilton rubs a hand through his hair as his eyes follow the fishing line up to the ceiling of the elevator, where the man is tied to, frowning even more when he sees one of the ceiling tiles is pushed out of the way. He groans, "Son of a bitch climbed out of the elevator. It was a diversion."

Chilton sighs in frustration and walks back towards the condo, "Eric, go get the driver and pull around back. Chris, Steve, Dave-- stay with me."

Eric nods and runs down the steps as he's told. Steve lingers at the stairwell, keeping guard, as Dave and Chris follow Chilton. Chris then stays at the door while Dave continues to follow Chilton inside.

Once inside, Chilton and Dave quickly start packing into two large duffle bags the money and contraband that's laying on the kitchen table.

The red-head walks into the doorway of the living room, her once perfect curls a frizzy mess as she wears nothing but the bed sheet wrapped around her petite frame, "Frederick, what's going on?"

Chilton looks over to her and gives her a weak smile, "Hey, Freddie, baby. Nothing's going on. Go back to bed. Take a nap, even."

The young woman frowns, eyeing Dave as the man frantically clears the last of the items from the table. She purses her lips before turning around, padding back down the hall to the bedroom without another word. Chilton sighs as he rubs his face with both hands.

In the hall, Steve is watching the stairwell anxiously with his gun drawn and the safety off. He still has half a magazine loaded in his pistol, and another waiting in his jacket pocket. He licks his lips, but then frowns when he hears something in the stairwell. Steve leans over the railing, his tie falling out of his jacket.

It's just enough length for Will to reach up and yank the man over the railing.

The man screams in terror, then screams in agony as his back connects with a sickening crunch on a rail of the fourteenth floor while falling down the center of the stairwell. This agonized, screaming game of pinball continues for another three rails until the man breaks his neck on the seventh floor's rail, killing him. The only sound he makes from that point is the thuds as he connects with another two rails and then the floor.

Chris had run over to see why Steve had screamed, then found himself unable to do anything but watch in transfixed horror as his cohort fell to his death. Distracted, he doesn't notice Will quietly coming up the steps, his own gun drawn.

Will eyes the other man then puts his gun back into its holster, coming up behind Chris to wrap his nitrile gloved hands around the man's neck with expert precision. The man immediately starts thrashing as Will holds him tight, softly shushing the panicking man as the brunette easily deprives the other man of much needed oxygen. Chris desperately kicks and swats at Will, but soon he slowly loses consciousness and goes limp in the blue eyed man's hold.

Will snaps the man's neck anyway, just for good measure, before letting Chris drop to the ground.

The brunette walks down the hall and back into the elevator, climbing up into the elevator shaft and then carefully onto the roof. From there, he climbs down to the penthouse's terrace, looking in through the windows carefully. He watches as Chilton and his last lackey rush to the door and throw it open, only to find their broken necked friend, quickly shutting the door again in fear.

Will can hear muffled shouting from Chilton, telling the lackey to check the terrace's fire escape. Will narrows his eyes and ducks for cover in the thick decorative shrubbery, his pistol with silencer drawn. As soon as the lackey is on the terrace, Will aims and shoots the man in the back of the head. The silencer muffles the gunshot from echoing too loudly into the city, which buys Will some time before the police figure out where it came from and arrive, but not enough to keep Chilton from hearing it.

Chilton is wide eyed in fear as he picks up the two duffle bags and slings their straps over his shoulder as he runs down the hall to the bedroom of the condo, looking to find his spare handgun, having dropped his own somewhere in the fray, too panicked to think about the loaded guns inside the duffle bags slung over his very own shoulders in this moment. He finds and pulls out his spare, shoving the magazine inside with shaking hands.

Chilton looks around the room wildly, seeing Freddie curled up and shaking in the far corner. He feels a pang of pity, but doesn't care enough to help her as he runs back down the hall, his gun aimed as he clicks the safety off while fearfully looking around.

His fear makes him careless. Will easily sneaks up behind him and presses a blade quickly against his throat. Chilton freezes immediately in place, raising his hands in surrender.

"Stop running," Will says before quickly taking Chilton's gun, one hand reapplying the safety before tossing the gun across the room.

Chilton nods as he swallows, smiling fearfully as he tries to look back at his captor, talking quickly, "Hey now, no need to be so hasty! I have money. Coke and dope, too! Not even cut yet. You can have any of it. All of it, if you'd like!"

Will ignores him and takes a burner phone out of his coat pocket, placing it firmly in one of Chilton's sweaty palms, "It has only one phone number programmed in it's contacts. Call it."

At that moment, Freddie inches into the room, redressed in her green argyle mini dress and black strappy pumps. Her long black coat is hanging open and a knitted scarf is wrapped around her neck, "Hey, Frederick. And, uh, Frederick's friend?"

Trying to reassure her that he means her no harm, Will gives her a polite smile and a small wave with his free hand. She blinks then smiles a little back, looking more confused than anything, "I'll talk to you later, Frederick. Bye," she quickly walks to the door and exits the condo.

"Dial, please," Will reminds Chilton once the door closes behind Freddie, pressing the blade deeper against the other man's throat. The sharp blade bites into his tender skin, a thin drip of blood running down his neck.

Chilton quickly flips open the phone with his thumb and navigates into the contacts as his hands shake, clicking the only number there and then the call button. He puts the phone to his ear, it rings twice before the call is answered. Chilton quickly asks, "Who is this?"

"Hello Frederick. It's Abel Gideon. I hope you remember me?" The voice on the other end of the line asks pleasantly, "I hear you've been sneaking around town lately."

"Just visiting for the day," Chilton insists.

"Hmm, interesting. So, we can agree that today's the last day of your little visit, and I won't hear about you sneaking around anymore?" The other man practically purrs.

"Absolutely, of course," Chilton quickly agrees.

Gideon laughs, "Good, good! May I speak with our mutual friend for a moment?"

Chilton pulls the phone away from his ear, holding it out towards Will's free hand, "He's asking for you."

Will takes the phone from Chilton and puts it to his own ear, "Hello?"

"Make sure our dear friend Frederick understands, then let him go on his merry way," Gideon says casually before the line disconnects. Will flips the phone shut then slips it back into his coat pocket. He'll destroy the phone and discard it's pieces along his way home.

Will looks at Chilton's profile as he presses the blade even deeper, the blade biting ever so slightly smartly into the green eyed man's skin, "Do you understand what Gideon asked?"

"Uh huh," Chilton says with rapid nods, scared stupid by this point.

"So, say it already," Will says simply.

"I understand…!" Chilton nearly wails.

"Good. Stay," Will praises then commands, as if he's talking to a dog. He then carefully lifts the blade away from the other man's neck before backing up quietly.

When Chilton finally has the nerve to turn around, Will is gone. Even though he never heard a door open or anything of the sort, he knows with certainty that the condo is completely empty save for himself. He rubs his bleeding neck as he lets out a sob of relief, grabbing the duffle bags before running out of the condo.

Chilton doesn't even care about the bodies of his men left behind as the faint sound of sirens are closing in from a distance. He just knows he's got to get out of there fast.

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On his way to the subway station, Will takes the flip phone out of his pocket. While walking, one hand carrying his large case and the other quickly thumbing the controls on the phone, he deletes Gideon's number, then deletes the call log, then factory resets the phone's memory.

The brunette then stops, placing the case down in front of himself for a moment to open the back of the phone, putting the back cover, battery, and sim card into his pocket. He then snaps the phone in half, placing both halves into his pocket as well.

He picks up his case again and continues walking. Every three blocks, he drops one piece of the cell phone from his pocket into a public city trash receptacle. Once his pocket is finally empty again, he walks another block then down into the subway station. He takes out his OMNY card, passing it over the sensor to get into the terminal then navigates to his platform.

The brunette quietly rides the subway car away from his 'job', the hum of the electricity on the rails his only entertainment. His eyes shift to a passenger wearing a pair of large over-the-ear headphones that has music softly humming from them. He quickly looks away as the subway car slows to a stop, the passenger standing and getting off when the doors open.

Will sighs through his nose. He'd love to be normal, carelessly listening to music on his commute, but in this lifestyle he can't afford the risk. Letting his guard down for even a moment means letting someone sneak up on you.

He's seated next to the back doors on the subway car, his fingers laced together and his elbows resting on his knees, his head bowed as he sighs again. His large case rests securely between his feet, blue eyes carefully sweeping his surroundings occasionally from beneath his long lashes as the subway car softly sways as it shoots down the line.

Eventually the subway car pulls up to his stop and he stands, picking up his case while he waits politely for others to exit before getting off himself. The brunette makes his way through the station and up the stairs out to ground level, walking the sidewalk at a steady pace.

He's always mindful to keep from standing out in the crowd. Always keeping quiet, keeping his head down, minding his own business. He's been a ghost since he started ‘cleaning’ after he turned twenty, a few months more than thirteen years ago.

His apartment and utilities are all under Jack's name, like all the other 'cleaners' under Jack's wing. He doesn't have a bank account, because he doesn't have a cover job to explain his 'cleaner' money. Jack just holds and keeps track of his earnings for him. He doesn't have credit cards either, or a cell phone. Not even family or a lover to miss him when he's gone from this world.

The blue eyed man walks into a corner store, the clerk greeting him cheerfully as he nods and smiles slightly while walking past. He quietly grabs a few grocery items to hold him over for the week. Two quarts of milk, four cans of soup, a carton of eggs, a pound of butter, and a small loaf of bread.

He walks up to the counter and places the items down, asking the clerk for them to slice him a half a pound of american cheese and the same for deli ham. The clerk agrees and soon returns, beginning to ring Will up. The brunette pays and takes a folded cloth grocery bag out from his large case, putting the items inside the bag before leaving the store.

He walks two doors up the street to his apartment building then walks up the steps, past an older teenage girl with blonde hair sitting on them, and goes inside. Will doesn't bother checking for mail, knowing the mailbox is empty. Jack pays all of Will's bills himself, and Will has no friends or family to ever write to him.

The brunette starts walking up towards the sixth floor, having moved his grocery bag into his left hand along with his case so he can have his right hand on the railing. He silently hopes he doesn't crush his loaf of bread again. His building has an elevator, but it's been broken for weeks and the landlord doesn't seem to care enough to fix it. Not that Will actually cares, either; he's in better shape than most people half his age.

As he steps onto the landing between the fifth and sixth floor, he notices a pair of slim jean-covered legs dangling between the intricately carved wooden rails of the sixth floor banister, and a faint plume of cigarette smoke coming from above as well. He frowns slightly and continues walking up the steps, eventually circling around to see the young boy from apartment 6B, if he remembers correctly.

The boy's sandy blonde hair is styled with an angled bob that just passes his lips at its longest point, with sweeping bangs in the front. He's wearing a tight red and white striped shirt with a grey oversized cardigan that's fallen off one of his shoulders, a pair of fitted black jeans, and a pair of red Chuck Taylors.

The boy turns his face to look over at Will with his large chestnut eyes, then the boy shifts from being propped up with his hands behind him to reclining back on his elbows, tucking his chin in as he looks up at Will. Will purses his lips as he continues to walk, making a point to keep a careful distance from the boy.

He doesn't like that kind of body language coming from a kid. Especially doesn't like it being directed towards himself. Not one bit. Nope.

As Will walks around the boy, he hears the kid softly say, "Hi," making the brunette frown and look as he keeps walking. It's only then, when Will's on the other side of the boy, that he finally sees the still lit cigarette that's laying stealthily next to the boy's thigh at the edge of the floor.

The blue eyed man can't help but huff a soft laugh at the boy's sneakiness, asking curiously with a tilt of his head, "Why'd you hide the cigarette?"

The boy pouts for a moment at being caught, but then turns his face to look fully at Will, his voice having a melodic accent when he states, "I don't want anyone to rat me out again. I've got enough problems."

Now that the boy has turned his face toward Will, his silken hair delicately falls away and the brunette notices bruising around the boy's right eye. They're deep but fresh, not even having had the chance to purple yet. Will's eyes widen as he slowly kneels towards the boy, who's eyes widen as he realizes what Will's looking at. He turns his face away and down, his hair slipping to cover the battered skin once again.

"What happened to your face?" Will gently prods as he frowns, seeing the boy's body language completely change as the kid quickly pulls himself into a sitting position, curling into the bannister and gripping it with white knuckles as he refuses to look at the older man.

"I fell off my bike," the boy says in a small and quiet voice, but Will's ears are practically ringing from how rehearsed it sounds.

Will clenches his jaw and sighs through his nose, looking away for a moment before standing straight again. Don't get involved, he tells himself as he turns around and starts towards his apartment without another word.

"Hey," the boy's soft voice calls. Will can't help but pause, looking back over his shoulder. The boy takes this as his cue to continue talking, picking up his cigarette again, "Don't tell my dad about me smoking, okay?"

Will looks silently at the boy before looking down at the floor for a moment, then looks at the kid again and nods once. The boy smiles brightly in return, causing Will to quickly turn around again and walk the last few feet to apartment 6D. He fishes his keys from his breast pocket and unlocks the front door, which is when he hears the door of apartment 6B open as loud voices immediately carry into the hall.

The brunette can't help but look over his shoulder, and watching as the young boy tosses his cigarette quickly over into the stairwell-- probably a smart move, though he hopes the kid is smart enough to have snubbed it out first, Will's not particularly fond of fire. One casually dressed man walks out quickly, who's arguing with a man in a navy suit who walks out after him, followed by a third man in a tan suit that leisurely strolls out of the apartment.

"It's just the way you gave it to me!" The sandy blonde haired man says, speaking in a thick accent similar to the boy's. His father, Will assumes, "I don't touch it. I don't even know what it means to cut it!"

The second man in the navy suit is tall, heavy set, and balding. The final man, who has his eyes closed, has wild light blonde hair and has a pair of Apple Airpods in his ears as he slightly sways his head, presumably to music.

"Listen, Lecter. In June, we gave you the dope and it tested one hundred percent pure. Now it's July, we pick up the dope, and it tests ninety percent pure," The balding man explains to the accented man with an agitated smile.

Will narrows his eyes and goes inside his apartment quickly, shutting the door. He continues watching through his peephole, the space under his door allowing their conversation to carry with only a slight muffle. He can tell by the way the suit jackets fall on the two men that they are both armed with at least one gun.

"Oh, come now, Cordell!" Lecter whines.

"Look, I'm trying to help you. I like you. But if you don't tell me where the rest of the dope is, I gotta bother Mason about this," Cordell says, motioning to the blonde, who is standing a couple feet away with his back facing the other two men, his hands stuffed into his pocket.

Lecter looks between the two men for a moment before his eyes settle on Cordell, "I'm telling the truth, Cordell. I have not touched your product."

Cordell sighs heavily, then walks over to Mason, putting a hand on the slighter man's shoulder. The man opens one piercing blue eye before taking out his Airpods, slipping them into his suit jacket's breast pocket, before asking Cordell expectantly, "Well?"

"He says he didn't cut the dope, Mason," Cordell informs the blonde, firm but almost hesitant.

"Oh," Mason says simply as he opens his other eye. The blonde then slowly turns towards Lecter, then walks into the man's personal space. Mason pats both hands on the older man's shoulders a couple times before squeezing gently, Lecter tensing up immediately, then Mason slides his hands up the sides of the man's neck before cupping his cheeks, "That's okay. My father raised me to be a patient, merciful man, Hannibal."

Hannibal smiles nervously, "Thank you--"

"I'll tell you what, Mister family man, Seventh-of-His-Name," Mason continues with a wide smile, cutting the older man off, "I'll give you until noon tomorrow to figure out who DID cut my heroin. Get them here for me to take care of, and get me back the rest of my product," Mason says as if it's the simplest instructions in the world, before pinching both of Hannibal's cheeks hard, the older man now pale in fear.

Mason then lightly pats Hannibal twice on one cheek, before taking his Apple Airpods out of his breast pocket and putting them back in his ears as he strolls away with a bounce in his step. Cordell smiles pleasantly at the older man before following Mason, clapping Hannibal on the shoulder firmly as he passes.

"W-wait! It's your product!" Hannibal loudly calls as he runs over to grip the bannister, not even paying mind to his wide eyed son, "You should find who took it yourself!"

"I'll see you tomorrow, Hannibal!" Mason's jovial voice echoes up the stairwell as the echo of their footsteps fade further away.

Hannibal paces in the hallway for a few minutes, one arm wrapped around himself tightly as he bites the thumb of his other hand. Only then does he finally seem to notice his son sitting on the floor, to which he quickly sweeps a kick to the boy's hip. It didn't look like a hard hit, but the way the boy had flinched and braced himself, Will could tell the boy had long since come to expect painful blows from his father, "What are you doing out here? Get inside, go do your homework."

"I already did my homework," The boy said in an almost defiant tone, despite being curled defensively into himself.

"Oh yeah?" The man rears his hand back and slaps the boy on his already bruised cheek, hard enough that Will hears the skin connect from in his apartment. The brunette clenched his jaw and looked away, "Then start cleaning the apartment since your older sister isn't here. And stop smoking cigarettes, before I break your jaw!"

The boy quickly pulls himself out from between the railing then runs to his apartment, looking on the verge of tears as he throws the door open with a bang before disappearing inside. Hannibal continues pacing in the hallway for a few more minutes, before following inside.

Will sighs heavily, locking the door's deadbolt before taking a few steps away as he rubs the back of his neck, thinking over everything he just witnessed. The kid's clearly getting abused, and his father is stealing from the dealers he's holding for. It's bound to end up messy. The kid will probably end up dying in the crossfire…

Will puts his hands on his hips while biting the inside of his lip as he looks at the ceiling for a moment, before sighing heavily again with a shake of his head. He ultimately decides that it's none of his business.

It's probably for the best if the kid ends up dead, anyway.

The brunette walks into his tiny kitchen and puts his groceries away before refolding his cloth bag, tucking it back into his large case. He then carries the case into his living room and places it onto the table gingerly. Will then walks over to the aglaonema plant sitting on the open windowsill and removes it to the nearby table before shutting the window.

Will then slips off his glasses, folding them before slipping the frames into the breast pocket of his knee-length black wool peacoat. They're not prescription lenses, they're just a physical barrier to keep blood out of his eyes, and a metaphorical barrier to help keep his composure. He then unties the waist belt of his peacoat and unbuttons the double breast, sliding the coat back down his arms then hanging it over a chair.

Underneath, he's wearing a leather double shoulder pistol holster with a loaded pistol and a spare loaded magazine attached on each side. A wide leather belt around his ribcage holsters several compact smoke bombs on one side and several military-grade pin grenades on the other. Two different sized, sheathed hunting knives are holstered onto his right upper thigh for easy access as well.

The blue eyed man carefully removes all of his weapons from their holsters. He double checks the safety is engaged on both guns before taking the magazines out, then opens a second case that's already sitting on the table and puts everything into its rightful place. He then sighs as he unbuckles each harness and slips them off, laying them neatly on the table as he stands there in an ironed, fitted white button down shirt, pressed black slacks, and black dress shoes that he really needs to polish.

The brunette walks into his bedroom, unbuttoning his shirt and dropping it into the hamper before pulling his undershirt over his head and dropping that in as well. He then sits on the edge of his bed and unlaces his shoes before slipping them off, taking off his socks and tossing them into the hamper easily then standing again to slip off his slacks and boxers. He drops them into his hamper as he walks past into his small bathroom.

He turns the shower on, not caring that it's lukewarm as he steps in. He begins to shampoo his curly hair, idly considering its length as he lathers then decides to ask Jack for some extra cash so he can get a haircut before rinsing out the product. He then scrubs thoroughly with

body wash and a washcloth, his pale skin turning slightly pink by the time he's done. The man finally sighs softly and closes his eyes, relaxing for a few moments as he lets the water run over his face, through his hair, and down his scar-covered body.

Eventually, Will turns the water off and grabs the towel hanging on the rack over the toilet. He quickly dries his body before ruffling his hair as dry as he can. The brunette then wraps the towel around his hips as he steps out and walks over to the sink, wiping the fog off with his hand as he stands in front of the mirror before rubbing the lower half of his face pensively.

Deciding his beard is a little on the long side, for him at least, he opens his medicine cabinet and takes out his electric razor, closing the cabinet and plugging it in. He trims it down before unplugging and opening the medicine cabinet again to put it away, taking out a well-kept straight razor kit and laying it open on the sink.

He wets the brush lightly before swirling it's bristles on the soap bar inside of it's tin, then uses the frothed brush to lather his neck. The blue eyed man polishes the blade on a leather strop for a moment to make sure it's sharp before slowly and carefully shaving his neck, edging his short beard so that it follows his jawline tightly.

The brunette then rinses his face with cold water and applies an aftershave that once he puts it on, he immediately cringes as he remembers that he keeps meaning to replace it. It's developed a sour afternote recently; probably from sitting too long in the bottle.

More money to ask from Jack, he muses with a sigh.

Will leaves the bathroom and goes back to the bedroom, taking out a pair of boxers and an undershirt from his dresser. The brunette tosses the towel into the hamper, needing to wash it now that he's used it three times. After pulling on his boxers and undershirt, he pads into the kitchen.

The man quietly makes a lunchmeat sandwich then opens a can of soup, pouring half of the contents into a small pot on the stove before turning the burner on, pouring the other half of its contents into a container he puts in the fridge. He drops the can into a bin of recycles and rubs the side of his face, his other hand resting on his hip as he waits for the soup to heat.

Once it's ready, he pours it into a bowl then washes the pot quickly, leaving it in the dishrack to dry before grabbing a spoon. The blue eyed man takes his food to the table in the living room, places it in front of one of the chairs, then returns to the kitchen. He gets a glass of water from the tap and pours a glass of milk from the fridge, bringing the two glasses to the table and sits. The brunette looks out the window as the sun sets for a long moment before starting to eat.

The brunette washes his dishes, glasses, and spoon when he's done, leaving them all to dry in the dishrack. He goes over to the table again and sits, pulling the plant over to him. He picks up a washcloth and a spray bottle filled with water that are both on the table, spraying and wiping each leaf with care as he checks for any signs of damage or pests. He then checks the moisture of the soil with his fingertips, knowing from touch alone that it doesn't need to be watered until tomorrow.

He puts the spray bottle and washcloth back, then pushes the plant gently away. Will then reaches over to turn on a lamp before opening both of his cases, pulling out each and every gun one by one to take them apart so he can clean and oil them with practiced precision before putting them back together and place them back into their proper spot in the cases. He then reloads all of the magazines to capacity, putting them away as well.

While most modern guns don't need to be cleaned and oiled on a daily bias, this is mostly due to the fact that most owners do not heavily use their modern guns on an almost daily bias. Will, however, rather not take a chance that one of his pistols will misfire from residue buildup or lack of lubrication. He likes having the use of his hands, thanks.

Once he's finished he sighs, standing from his chair and stretching for a moment with a soft groan, before looking at the clock on the wall and seeing that it's quarter to ten at night. He turns off the lamp, then checks the windows and front door to make sure they're locked.

The man then walks down the hall into his bedroom, not bothering to turn on the light. Will pulls back the blankets and climbs in, pulling them up mid chest as he lays on his back, his hands laced together over his stomach. He stares at the ceiling for some time, listening to the muffled sounds of the city below when his eyes slowly start to flutter shut, sleep finally claiming him.

Just another day in a long line of unmemorable days. Or at least, he went to sleep believing that.

Chapter End Notes

If there's anything you feel I should add to the tags, please let me know! Thoughts, questions, constructive criticism? Drop me a comment!

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

CW: Depictions of child abuse in this chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Beeping echoes in a steady, repetitive interval for eleven seconds through the otherwise quiet bedroom before Will hits the snooze button on his digital alarm clock. The brunette yawns before switching the alarm off and sitting up, looking at the blue numbers on the clock as if he expects them to say anything other than three in the morning.

Without waiting another moment, the man pulls back the blankets and swings his legs over the side, stretching his arms into the sky with a soft groan before standing. Will pads over to his dresser, opening a drawer to pull out a pair of black sweatpants and a matching sweatshirt, pulling them on over his boxers and undershirt. He then opens another drawer and takes out a pair of socks, hopping from one foot to the other to pull them on before walking out of the bedroom.

Will walks down the hall then through the living room into the kitchen, grabbing the reusable water bottle off the counter and fills it from the faucet. The brunette then walks back into the living room and over to his peacoat, reaching into its pocket for his keys and drops them into his sweatpants' pocket. He then walks over to the left of the front door and kneels, putting on his black and white Asics sneakers that are waiting for him.

The man stands again and rolls his neck as he unlocks the deadbolt before opening the door, heading out into the hall. He locks the doorknob and deadbolt after himself and drops back into his pocket before making his way down through the silent building. Once outside, he closes his eyes and takes in a deep breath of the cool autumn air. He lets it out slowly then opens his eyes and jogs down the steps, immediately beginning his run once his heel touches the sidewalk.

Will is quick and agile on his feet, his pace making him break into a sweat quickly as he easily maneuvers around the few people out in the city at this hour. He carefully checks both ways before crossing every street, and when waiting at traffic lights he stops to take a small drink of water before jogging in place to keep his blood pumping.

During the entire length of his eight and a half mile run, the brunette's usually busy mind is quiet. He concentrates almost completely on regulating his breathing: in through his nose for three foot falls, out through his mouth for three foot falls. The brisk pace he keeps would put him toe to toe with most marathon runners, and he maintains it with practiced ease as he pushes through the hour-long routine that winds around the city blocks.

In the end, his path returns him to his apartment building. He slows to a jog when he's fifteen feet away, before walking normally up the steps. Will's breathing is quite heavy and he's drenched in sweat, but he wouldn't call himself out of breath just yet. By the time he walks up to the sixth floor, his breathing has calmed completely again.

The brunette walks to his front door and takes out his keys, unlocking both deadbolt and doorknob and letting himself in before locking the deadbolt behind himself. He kneels and unlaces his sneakers, slipping them off and leaving them neatly in their usual place to the left of the door. He walks over to his peacoat and drops his keys back into the coat's pocket.

Will brings the water bottle with him as he walks down the hallway to his bedroom, putting it on the dresser. He takes both pillows off his bed and puts them on the dresser, then pulls the top sheet and blanket off and folds them before setting them on top of the dresser as well. The brunette then flips the queen mattress up against the wall, fitted sheet still on top, and then the boxspring afterwards.

Will walks back to the dresser and picks up the 70lb kettlebell sitting on top, walking to the center of the now much more spacious bedroom and placing the weight on the floor. He then walks back to the dresser and picks up door frame pull-up clamps and walks over to the bedroom door, securing each carefully to the overhead frame with the appropriate spacing.

The blue eyed man then walks back to the center of the room and starts the first set of his exercises, beginning with twenty-five burpees. He then picks up the kettlebell and does ten goblet squats before placing it back down. He then does fifty push ups, before finishing with moving over to the door frame and doing twenty pull ups.

The whole set barely takes him eleven minutes. Despite the pace he keeps through every exercise and repetition, Will's form for every position is consistently flawless. His breathing, though heavy, stays controlled and even.

Will takes a three minute break, walking over to the dresser for a small drink of water, then walks back to the center of the room and repeats it all over again for a second set. When finished, the brunette takes another three minute break and a drink of water, before starting a third set. Another three minute break with water, his breathing bordering on labored now, before beginning a fourth set. A final three minute break as he finishes the water, his breathing on the verge of panting as one hand rests on his hip, before starting his fifth and final set.

Once finished, Will folds both arms over his head as he concentrates on catching his breath, looking over to the alarm clock and sees that it's ten past five. Right on time, as always.

The brunette peels his soaked clothing off piece by piece, dropping it all into the hamper before walking past his bathroom to the linen closet to grab a fresh towel. He then walks back into the bathroom and hangs the towel on the rack over the toilet.

Will steps back to the sink and opens the medicine cabinet, taking out his toothbrush and putting some peppermint toothpaste on before wetting it and brushing his teeth. The blue eyed man spits and rinses both mouth and brush, taking out a small bottle of mouthwash and

gargles. He spits again before putting the brush and mouthwash away, closing the medicine cabinet.

Will then turns on the shower and gets under the lukewarm water, quickly lathering shampoo through his curls before rinsing. He then pours body wash onto his washcloth and thoroughly scrubs down his body. The brunette quickly rinses then shuts the water, not having time to waste during morning showers. He grabs the towel from the rack and dries his body before ruffling his hair as dry as he can, then rehangs the towel before padding back to his bedroom.

The blue eyed man carefully lowers the boxspring and mattress back down to the floor, taking the folded top sheet and blanket off the dresser and neatly makes the bed. He then tosses the two pillows into their proper place at the head before opening one of the drawers to pull out an undershirt, a pair of boxers, and a pair of socks. He pulls the shirt over his head, slips on the boxers, then hops from foot to foot to put on his socks.

Will then walks over to his closet and slides open one of the doors, taking out a pale blue fitted button down shirt that's been meticulously ironed and slips it on. He buttons it quickly, leaving the last button open. The man then slides the door shut and walks a few steps over to slide open another door, taking out a pair of pressed black slacks that are folded in half over a hanger, slipping them up and fastening them.

Will looks again to the alarm, seeing it say half past five. The brunette walks over to sit on the bed, slipping on his dress shoes and quickly tying them before standing again and walking out of the room, down the hallway to the kitchen.

The brunette takes the frying pan from the dish rack and puts it on the stove, taking butter and eggs out of the fridge. He turns on the burner and greases the pan lightly, cracking two eggs into the pan before dropping the shells into the trash can. While they start to cook, he grabs the loaf of bread and takes out two slices, dropping them into the toaster.

Will grabs the spatula from the dish rack and flips the eggs, before taking a plate from the dish rack and lifts the eggs onto it. He washes both spatula and frying pan, places them back in the dish rack to dry just as the toast pops. The brunette grabs a knife from the dish rack and butters the toast lightly before placing them onto his plate, then washes the knife and places it back into the dish rack and grabs a fork.

The man stays standing at the counter and quickly eats his breakfast, being careful not to get anything on his clothes. He sops up the last of the yolk on the plate with the last piece of his toast, then washes his plate and fork, placing them in the dish rack before washing his hands and dries them on a towel sitting on the counter.

He makes his way over to the window and opens it, eyeing the sky cautiously for rain for a few seconds before reaching over to the table and placing the aglaonema plant on the center of the open windowsill.

The blue eyed man then walks to the table and with practiced skill, he quickly slips on his harnesses and opens the second case. He puts magazines into his guns and screws silencers onto them then slips them into their harnesses. He clips the spare magazines onto the harnesses afterwards, then slips the sheathed hunting knives in their harnesses as well. The

brunette puts on the waist belt and fills it's loops with smoke bomb canisters and military-grade pin grenades.

Will then pulls on his peacoat, taking his glasses out of his breast pocket and slipping them on as he walks towards the door. He buttons the coat afterwards before tying the waist sash, unlocking the deadbolt and stepping into the hall. The brunette shuts the front door before locking the doorknob and deadbolt behind himself.

The blue eyed man walks down the stairwell and out the apartment building, making his way through the city. Soon enough, he steps up to the front door of Jack's jazz club and punches the code into the deadbolt's keypad to unlock it. He opens the door, walking inside and locking it behind himself.

Will walks through the empty club to the office in the back, opening the door to see Jack at the fridge as he takes out a quart of milk. The older man is holding two small glasses in his other hand, one of them having ice in it. Jack looks over to Will then looks up at the clock on the wall and chuckles, "Six am on the dot, Will. And you look wide awake. Do you ever sleep?"

"I get about five hours daily," the younger man replies as he walks over and sits in his usual chair. The older man walks over and puts the milk and glasses down next to the half empty bottle of whiskey that's already sitting on the table.

"Your job went well yesterday. Gideon was very pleased, he even tipped you an additional thousand. That's five for every head; take away my cut, one for each. Then add your tip. Brings your total for that job to thirteen thousand," Jack says, then sits and pours their drinks. Once again, Will silently watches the whiskey pour with pursed lips before looking up to Jack.

"I was actually hoping to talk to you about my money, Jack. I know you gave me the usual already for this month, but I was thinking about replacing a couple things and getting a haircut."

Jack narrows his eyes a bit but nods, "Yeah, of course Will. How does an additional five sound? Maybe think about buying a television for that bare bones apartment, you practically live like a priest. Goodness knows you make more than the rest of my men even on a bad month, you can afford to splurge a little."

Will huffs, "A priest?"

The olderan chuckles, giving him a knowing look, "You haven't slept with anyone since I got you sober after Molly broke your heart thirteen years ago. The only indulgences you keep in your apartment are a beat up radio and a potted plant. And you're so good at following orders, I'm surprised that you don't have fleas. Ergo, priest-like."

The blue eyed man has to resist the urge to roll his eyes as he says sarcastically, "I'll think about the television if you stop with the catholicism."

Jack laughs heartily as he stands and nods, walking over to the lifesize portrait of himself and his wife Bella on their wedding day. He lifted it off carefully and set it down against the wall. Behind the portrait was hidden a large, traditional dial safe and had it been any other of his cleaners, Jack wouldn't have revealed the safe's location. But the older man trusts Will with his life, and hopes the feeling is mutual.

Will, on the other hand, watches the older man quietly. The angle and distance is just right for his calculating blue eyes to see the combination as Jack turns the dial carefully. Will commits the numbers to memory as the safe pops open before looking away.

Insurance for a rainy day.

Jack takes a tan mailer envelope from the safe and a stack of fifty dollar bills that have a brown paper strap with the value 'five thousand dollars' printed on it, tucking the stack into the envelope. The older man closes the safe and spins the dial to lock it, before lifting the portrait with care to rehang it.

The larger man walks back over to the table and sits again, holding the envelope out to Will with a smile. When Will reaches to take it, Jack quickly pulls it away, giving the younger man a look as he raises a brow, "You're not lying to me about why you need the money, are you?"

Will glares at the other man then snatches the envelope before abruptly standing, the chair nearly falling over, "I'm thirty three, and you're not my father. Stop patronizing me," The younger man tucks the envelope snugly between his belt and shirt, knowing from past experience that the envelope won't shift or fall before he gets home, "I'm assuming you don't have work for me today. I'm leaving."

Jack shakes his head with a chuckle, "Alright. I'll see you tomorrow, Will."

Will quickly drinks the milk; having grown up hungry shuffling through the foster system guilts him away from wasting anything. He practically slams the glass down, earning a bark of a laugh from Jack as Will walks out of the room without a proper goodbye. The brunette walks through the empty club and opens the front door, shutting it behind himself and locking the deadbolt keypad.

The blue eyed man stuffs his hands in his pockets as he walks through the city, making his way to the local movie theater. This particular location likes replaying old blockbusters on weekday mornings, which always was a nice treat for Will every now and again. He didn't go too often, maybe once every week or two weeks; but it was often enough to feel routine. The brunette checks the schedule on the wall for this morning's options. He sees his choices were between The Matrix, Finding Nemo, and Men in Black.

Will didn't know what Finding Nemo was, but judging by the digital caricature of a smiling clown fish, it seemed like a children's movie. He remembered The Matrix being pretty good when he saw it in theaters, but that was nearly twenty-two years ago, and quite frankly he's not in the mood for existential nihilism. So that leaves him with Men In Black, which, honestly? The movie was pretty funny when he was a teenager, and he could use a laugh right now.

With a sigh, Will takes his wallet out of his breast pocket and goes up to the window, smiling politely to the same teenager he always sees in the booth. The girl perks up and smiles, and he asks for a ticket to the next showing of his choice movie. He's careful not to touch her as he passes the money over, preferring to keep all bare skin-to-skin contact at an absolute minimum. Unfortunately for Will, she still hasn't caught on after all these weeks, carelessly brushing his skin against her's as she puts the coins and stub into his open palm.

Will scrunches his nose at the brief contact as he quickly pulls away, not noticing the confused look from the girl as he steps into the building. The movie wouldn't start for another half hour, but waiting inside the lobby would provide him a more controlled environment than being out in the open.

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The shrill ringing of the classic twin bell alarm clock jolts Hannibal suddenly out of his restless sleep, propelling him up into a seated position. The man is breathing heavily while looking around the room anxiously, dark circles under his chestnut eyes. The blonde woman in the bed beside him groans softly as she grabs the alarm clock, flipping the switch on the back to stop the hammer from striking the bells.

Hannibal looks down at her then rubs his sweaty face with both hands as he realizes that his wife is still alive, and he can hear the tv in the other room so he comes to the conclusion that his children are likely just as safe. It was just a nightmare, at least for now, "Simonetta, what time is it?"

Simonetta places the clock back on the nightstand as she sits up and stretches, wearing a light pink silk slip. Her voice is accented, though not the same origin as her husband's, "You know I set the alarm for seven thirty, Han. I've got to leave by eight thirty if I want to get to work on-time."

Hannibal nods quietly as the woman pulls the blankets back and gets out of bed, watching as her hips unintentionally sway while she walks over to the dresser and starts pulling clothes out. The blonde woman delicately pulls the slip over her head, wearing nothing underneath, before bending over to slip on lace underwear.

"Don't you have to be at the office at nine yourself? You really need to get out of bed, tesoro." The woman gently scolds as she stands up and slips on a matching bra, reaching behind to clasp it with ease. She then pulls on stockings before slipping on a knee length black pencil skirt, zipping it up. Simonetta then pulls a v-neck tan sweater overtop before walking out of the bedroom.

Hannibal sighs heavily and looks out the window, his blood feeling cold in his veins from anxiety as he mutters to himself, "I'm calling out sick."

Simonetta walks into the second bedroom, where a four year old girl still lays in bed fast asleep. Her mother sits on the edge of the full bed that the tot shares with her sixteen year old sister, gently shaking the little girl's shoulder as the woman speaks softly, "Passerotta, it's time to wake up."

The little girl hums as she stirs from sleep, turning onto her back and rubbing her eyes with her little fists before yawning. Her wavy blonde hair is shoulder length with bangs that almost cover her eyes, wild from sleep. The woman smiles then leans down to kiss the little girl on the forehead before standing again, "Come get breakfast, Mischa."

Without another word, the woman walks out of the bedroom, leaving the four year old again on her own. The little girl sits up, looking across the room to the twin bed on the other side of the large dresser that the three siblings shared. She pouts when she sees it empty and neatly made, disappointed that her brother is already awake. Mischa then quickly crawls to the edge of her bed and climbs off with all of the clumsy grace a four year old can muster.

Wearing a large white teeshirt that goes to her knees, underwear, and a pair of socks that made her feet look like The Very Hungry Caterpillar, Mischa quickly runs out the bedroom and down the hall to the bathroom. She opens the door with both hands then quickly pulls it closed behind her.

Meanwhile, Simonetta is in the tiny kitchen packing herself lunch for later that day. The eldest of the siblings is in the living room watching and mimicking a pilates class dvd on the television. The middle sibling is sitting at the table nearby, impatiently checking the clock on the kitchen wall that read seven fifty, knowing that at eight it was his turn to get the television.

The preteen then hears the faint pitter patter of excited, tiny socked feet coming from the hallway and looks over. He smiles happily when he sees his baby sister's heart shaped face running his way. Holding his arms open, she runs right into them to hug him with all her tiny might as he hugs her gently.

"Anni!" The tiny blonde cries out before pulling back to smile brighter than the sun as she looks up at him. Mischa knows how to pronounce his name properly now, but the nickname from when she couldn't has stuck.

"I thought that was you I heard waddling down the hall!" Hannibal says joyfully, kissing her on each cheek before nuzzling her nose with his, the little girl giggling the entire time as she tries tickling him. He chuckles as he then runs his fingers through her tangled waves, smoothing them gently, "Good morning, little duck."

The eldest sibling looks back over her shoulder at her younger siblings before rolling her grey eyes that she inherited from their mother, smoothly following the instructor on the television into the next position. The teenager's mid-back length blonde waves are pulled up into a bun while she exercises, and she is wearing bright red leggings with a loose black crop top that hangs off her shoulder to tease the straps of a white sports bra.

Simonetta looks over and sees Mischa in the living room finally, so grabs a bowl and a cup from the cabinet, placing them on the counter. She grabs the box of stale Cheerios and pours a small portion into the bowl, then opens the fridge and pours apple juice. The woman brings the juice and cereal over to the table, putting them in front of a chair.

Hannibal immediately stands to pull the chair out and helps Mischa up into it. As Hannibal pushes the chair in, Simonetta has already made her way down the hallway to open the

bathroom door. She shuts it behind herself, still needing to do her hygiene routine and put on makeup before leaving for work.

Simonetta has already washed her face, brushed her teeth, applied eyeshadow, and is now applying eyeliner when her husband opens the bathroom door and steps inside. He shuts it behind himself while looking anxiously at the floor, "Simonetta, I think…" he pauses, swallowing, "I think I messed up."

Unconcerned, the blonde finishes the eyeliner and drops it into her makeup bag before digging out mascara, leaning forward again as she opens it and starts to apply, "It's not the first time, Han, and it won't be the last. Don't sound so morbid. You'll figure it out, you always do."

The man looks up to her for a quiet moment, eyes trying to commit his beautiful wife's face to memory. He walks over and hugs her from behind, kissing her shoulder as she drops the mascara into the makeup bag and digs out a nude lipstick, "Yeah... I just think I might've gone a little too far this time, brangioji."

Simonetta puts on her lipstick then hums, but as Hannibal starts kissing her neck and his hands start wandering under her sweater, she caps the lipstick and rolls her eyes as she huffs before dropping it into the bag, "You're going a little too far right now, tesoro. You're going to make me late."

Hannibal turns her around and kisses her, desperate for something to distract him from the impending threat looming on the horizon, muttering against her lips, "Take a sick day, stay home. Stay with me."

Simonetta sighs in defeat as she shivers and arches to his touch, muttering under her breath, "I'll call out in a bit… You're going to get me fired one of these days."

In the living room, Hannibal looks over at the clock on the kitchen wall yet again before slumping in his chair, glowering at his older sister as she continues along with her dvd. It was now eleven past eight, and he was missing the start of Mythbusters on the Science Channel.

"You're taking up my turn, Bedelia," the boy spat out in anger, Mischa looking up at him worriedly as she picked up a few loops of cereal and stuffed them into her mouth before chewing. Hannibal was normally careful to mind his emotions around her, but right now he couldn't help himself. This was the third time this week.

Bedelia rolls her eyes again with a dramatic sigh, "Who cares, Hannibal. It's reruns. Mythbusters was canceled years ago."

Hannibal huffs, looking up at the clock again before eyeing the two remotes that sat ever so temptingly on the coffee table between Bedelia and the couch. He mumbles under his breath, "They're new to me. I've never seen them before."

The boy then looks to Mischa and holds his index finger over his lips in a "shh" motion before slowly walking to the coffee table, carefully grabbing the two remotes before

returning just as stealthily to his seat. The boy bites his lip in indecision for a moment, looking between his older sister and the tv.

Deciding that maybe today Bedelia won't have a temper, he plugs the numbers for the Science Channel into the cable remote. He watches as a red dot lights on the cable box, indicating a channel change, and looks quickly to Bedelia to see if she noticed. The teen continues her routine without a care as Hannibal hesitates. He points the television remote at the sensor for a minute, watching his sister, before hitting the input button three times rapidly so that the television cycles to the cable box.

The soothing pilates instructor that Bedelia had been watching is suddenly replaced with static for a moment before the screen lights up with Kari Byron and Grant Imahara's cheerful faces and excited body language as they gleefully explain that portion of the episode's experiment and how it's likely going to prove the already-failed rumor true this time.

Bedelia groans in aggravation as she drops to sit on the floor, whipping her head to glare at her younger brother before starting to get up, "You're dead, you stupid little gremlin."

Hannibal's eyes widen as he quickly realizes that he has miscalculated, jumping out of his chair and running out of the room as he cries out, "Momma! She's gonna hit me!"

Hannibal runs down the hall and throws open the bathroom door, having hoped to find sanctuary from his sister's fists behind his mother. Instead, his face screws up in disgust at finding his parents half naked and in the middle of fucking. His mother is seated on the sink, legs and arms wrapped around his father.

They both notice him immediately and stop, groaning in frustration at the interruption. Simonetta grumbles out in her native tongue, "Essere attaccato alle gonnelle della mamma," while Hannibal shouts, "Close the fucking door!"

"Ew!" Bedelia shouts when she catches up and looks into the bathroom before quickly slamming the door shut, which startles the boy out of his stupor.

Before he can run away, she grabs the preteen by the collar of his threadbare long sleeve sleep shirt, yanking him back roughly as he reflexively covers his face with his forearms. The older teen then proceeds to punch him hard in the ribs several times as he bites down on his lips to keep from making a sound, not wanting to give her the satisfaction of hearing his pain.

After the eighth or ninth hit, Hannibal often had trouble keeping track, she gets bored and shoves him hard enough that he trips over his own feet. The boy tumbles into a heap on the floor, then listens to his sister's footsteps fade as she walks back to the living room before pushing himself up onto his hands and knees with a wince.

He lets his head hang for a moment, angry tears welling up in his eyes as he glares down at the floor. He thinks about how much he hates her, how much he hates all of them. Even himself. How much he wishes they all were dead.

All of them but his little duck, the only good he has in his life.

A couple tears drop down to the floor and he quickly sits back on his knees, wiping his eyes on his sleeves before standing. The preteen winces at the soreness in his ribs as he walks into the shared bedroom, knowing he'll probably have some colorful bruising there tomorrow. But that's nothing new, and it'll be hidden underneath his clothing anyway. It's not like anyone would see it, and not like anyone would even care, even if they saw.

The boy lifts his shirt off over his head with a wince, then shrugs off his sleep pants, leaving him standing in just his boxer briefs. He opens one of his drawers and takes out a pair of fitted light blue high-waisted jeans, pulling them on and buttoning them. Then he pulls out one of his favorite sweaters, a cream knitted wide v-neck where the neck wrists and waist all have a two inch black trim. He looks at himself in the mirror that sits on top of the dresser for a moment, tucking a lock of silky sandy hair behind his ear as he shifts his weight from one foot to the other.

Part of him wonders if he'll always be short and small-framed like he is now. If he'll look like one of the compact yet delicate Italian Sforza men from his mother's family photographs. Or maybe, he'll grow to be tall with lean strength instead, having broad shoulders and narrow hips like the Lithuanian Lecter men of his father's family photographs.

If someone were to ask him which he'd prefer, sentimentality and aesthetically pushes his desire to take after his mother. But as far as survival is concerned, he knows his father's genetics are the better option, despite how much he hates sharing the man's name and looks.

Hannibal grabs a pair of black socks then closes his drawer before sitting on the floor, putting them on before reaching under his bed to grab his red hightop converses. He pulls them on and ties them before getting up again, brushing his jeans off before leaving the bedroom and walks back to the living room.

Bedelia was nowhere to be found, much to his relief. He looks up at the clock on the wall and sees it's almost eight forty-five. His parents were now talking in the kitchen, though it just sounded like white noise to him. Hannibal looked into the living room and saw Josh and Blue from Blue's Clues & You! on the television for his little sister to watch, Bedelia must have put it on before getting into the shower, to get ready for school at nine thirty.

Hannibal was also meant to be at school at nine thirty, but lately he hadn't been going. It's not that he was a bad student, quite the opposite actually; he had straight A's all his life and was in all advanced classes before he started skipping. But didn't have any friends, and the older boys liked cornering him in the hallways when teachers weren't looking and whispered creepy taunts in his ears that made him uncomfortable. It was only a matter of time before one of them cornered him somewhere else and followed through on one of their taunts. He quickly shook his head at the thought.

The preteen looked over to his parents again, getting nervous as he suddenly realized neither had left for work yet. They should have left to drop off Mischa at preschool by now. Before he can stop himself, he says loudly from the living room, "You shouldn't take sick days from work if you're not actually sick."

Simonetta and Hannibal stop both talking, his mother wrapping one arm around her waist while her other hand covers her eyes, muttering something softly under her breath. His father,

on the other hand, slowly turns towards the preteen while narrowing his eyes, asking carefully, "What did you say, brat?"

Hannibal tenses immediately, knowing he made yet another miscalculation that he was going to soon pay for. The boy swallows and squares his shoulders defiantly, "You're being irresponsible. What if you get fired? Mischa will go hungry."

Hannibal huffs a laugh, rubbing his mouth with one hand as his other hand sits on his hip, "Wait, so kid that doesn't go to school, even after I've paid all that money for tuition, is telling me not to play hookie… Kid's got jokes."

Before the preteen thinks to run, his father storms across the room and backhands him hard across the face. The boy drops to the floor, blood flowing freely from his nose as he quickly folds over his lap, trying to keep the blood off his sweater.

Simonetta immediately cries out as she puts her hands on her hips, "Oh, come now, tesoro! Do you have to do this every time he mouths off?"

The man growls and turns to point at her, "He mouths off because you baby him," then stalks out the room and down the hall.

Mischa finally gets curious from all the shouting and stands from where she was seated on the couch, gripping the plush couch back with tiny hands as she looks around then over to Hannibal on the floor. When she sees her beloved brother bleeding, she sniffles for a few seconds before wailing loudly in distress as tears run down her face.

Simonetta tuts and quickly goes over to the four year old, scooping her up and rubbing her back as she bounces the little girl in an attempt to soothe, looking reproachfully at the boy still on the floor, "Look what you've done, cucciolo. You've upset Mischa with all this foolishness. Go, make yourself useful. Take money from my purse and get some groceries from the corner while tėvas cools off."

Hannibal nods miserably as he stands, pinching his nose with one hand to stop the bleeding while cupping his chin with the other to contain the blood. He listens to Mischa's sobs, his heart aching, as he walks towards his mother's purse on the coffee table.

"No no no, wash your hands first, Hannibal! You're going to get blood everywhere!" She commands with a groan of irritation.

Hannibal flinches at her tone and bites his lip. He then walks to the sink and leans in to rinse his face and hands, turning the water off afterwards before quickly grabbing a few sheets of paper towel to dry his hands then press against his still bleeding nose. He then looks down to check his sweater and whimpers softly, broken-hearted at seeing a few drops of blood have dropped down onto the cream fabric, ruining it.

With one hand still holding the paper towel to his face and his eyes glued to the floor, he walks back over to the coffee table and digs around inside the purse with one hand. The boy finds a twenty dollar bill then a five dollar bill, shoving both into his pocket. He walks to the front door, unlocking the deadbolt then walks into the hallway, letting the door swing shut

behind him. He didn't grab a set of keys, but his family had stayed home today anyway, so he's not worried about getting locked out.

The preteen goes down to the third floor before he pulls the paper towel away from his face, now completely red and saturated with blood. He looks over the railing and lets it drop down the center of the stairwell, the soft wet thwap of it hitting the ground echoing into the air. He doesn't care at that moment how disgusting it might be for someone else to have to clean it.

With a bloody lower half of a face, the boy pinches the bridge of his nose again with one hand and cups his lower face with his other hand as the blood continues to sluggishly drip out of both nostrils. He sits on the second to last step on the stairs leading up to the fourth floor, stewing miserably. The preteen had thought about running away, several times; but the very idea of abandoning Mischa with his family breaks his heart. So instead, he endures.

After maybe an hour of just sitting in silence, Hannibal hears someone's even footsteps echoing up the stairs. He quickly stands and walks over to the far wall, turning so his back will be facing the resident when they approach. Whoever it is, this isn't any of their business. They'll walk past if he ignores them long enough. They always do.

Or so he thought.

When the person gets to the third floor, they walk over and come to a stop beside the preteen, saying nothing. After probably fifteen or so minutes of standing together in awkward silence, the boy gives in to curiosity and slowly turns around to see who it is, even though at first his eyes are glued to the floor.

Hannibal sees a pair of old but well-kept black leather dress shoes. His eyes slowly move up the pressed black slacks, noticing a plastic thank you bag with a few items in it along the way. He then recognizes the familiar knee-length black peacoat that only one of the building's residents wears, quickly realizing who's standing before him. The boy then sees a peak of a pale blue button down shirt, one button undone at the top. His eyes continue up the pale skin and fluffy brown hair that curls at the nape of the man's neck, which looked shorter than it did yesterday. The beard on his squared jaw is also shorter than the day before, and the man's lips were frowning. The boy's eyes continued up to the man's impossibly intense blue eyes, which were not hidden behind his usual set of glasses, for once.

The two quietly hold each other's gaze for a moment, both eyes equally filled with sadness, before the boy looks away. The man looks down at the floor as he reaches into his pocket, taking out a handkerchief and holding it out to the boy without looking up. Hannibal blinks a few times as he looks at the white cotton cloth with royal blue embroidery on the edging. He almost wants to snidely ask what decade the older man is from, or if the cloth was even clean.

Instead, he lowers the hand that's pinching the bridge of his nose and takes the handkerchief. Will looks up to the preteen's face again as he starts to gently wipe the blood, Hannibal looking up to meet the man's eyes again, "Is life always this hard, or is it just this bad when you're a kid?" The boy asks, his voice coming out smaller and softer, more vulnerable, than he had ever intended.

Will stares quietly at him for a moment, looking like he's debating something, then sighs heavily through his nose. Hannibal doesn't find pity in the man's eyes, but empathy instead, as if the man's been where Hannibal stands now. It's comforting. The brunette softly says, "Always this hard."

Hannibal nods a little as he continues wiping the blood from his face, the bleeding having finally stopped. Will stuffs his hands into his pockets and turns without another word, walking towards the steps leading to the fourth floor. The preteen pulls the bloody handkerchief down from his face and looks at it awkwardly, then holds it out hesitantly despite wanting to keep it, "Hey, wait..!"

Will pauses on the steps, looking over his shoulder and immediately realizes what Hannibal wants to-- yet doesn't want to-- ask, "Keep it. Or toss it. I don't know, kid. Follow your spirit." The boy nods a little before wiping his nose again, Will looking forward again then continues walking up the steps. Will is almost at the top when Hannibal calls out to him once more.

"Hey! I'm going grocery shopping. Do you want some milk?" The boy asks as he lowers the handkerchief and fidgets with its edges, smiling a little as he looks up at the man, "It's two quarts of whole milk, right?"

Will stops immediately, turning to look down at the boy with calculating, narrowed eyes as his thoughts race. The brunette nearly always uses his cloth bag for groceries, so he knows the boy can't see what he buys like one would with those wasteful plastic thank you bags. That means the preteen must have watched him at the corner store enough times to notice a pattern in Will's shopping habits. But how could he, with the older man's hypervigilance whenever outside his apartment? How could Will have overlooked this boy's frequent attention? Is Will getting careless, or worse, reckless? What else, or who else, is he not noticing just beyond his peripheral?

Will clenches his jaw but replies to the boy's question with a quiet nod, keeping his face composed and neutral. Unaware of the man's sudden stress and paranoia, the boy smiles widely before jogging down the hall, quickly disappearing from Will's view.

The brunette growls and rubs his face with both hands, frustrated by this revelation, before continuing up the stairs. He walks past apartment 6B, where he hears the muffled voice of an older teenage girl and a woman in a shouting match. Will shakes his head, assuming they likely had something to do with why the boy was hiding downstairs.

The blue eyed man pulls his keys out of his pocket as he steps up to his door, unlocking the deadbolt and doorknob before letting himself inside. He shuts the door behind himself and relocks the deadbolt, walking over to the table and puts the plastic bag down before untying his waist belt and unbuttoning his peacoat. He slips the coat off and hangs it on the usual chair, then carefully removes all of his weapons from their holsters, double checking the safety for both guns before unscrewing the silencers and removing the magazines.

The man then opens the second case on the table and methodically puts everything into its rightful place, as always, before closing the case again. He proceeds to unbuckle each harness and slip them off, laying them neatly on the table.

Not only was it much earlier in the day than usual for the brunette to be home, but he also didn't have a 'job' to work him into a sweat, so he didn't see a point in taking his second shower today. With his usual routine disrupted, the man sighs and rubs the back of his neck awkwardly. Will looks up at the clock on the wall and sees that it's already eleven thirty-two; he saw the kid back downstairs probably twenty minutes ago, so he wondered how much longer it'd be before he heard a knock on his door.

The blue eyed man opens the plastic thank you bag on the table and takes out an unopened box of aftershave, a new bottle of body wash, and a new bottle of shampoo, cradling them in one arm as he walks down the hall. He puts the new shampoo and body wash on the floor next to the shower, since bottles that were already in the shower were still half-full. He then walks over to the sink and opens the medicine cabinet, then opens the box to take out a new bottle of aftershave. He takes the old bottle out of the cabinet with his empty hand and replaces it with the new bottle before closing the cabinet.

The man takes the old bottle and the now empty box as he walks back down the hall into the living room, putting both into the plastic bag on the table before carrying the bag into the kitchen. He drops the thank you bag into the trash can before returning to the living room, taking a seat on the couch next to the end table that has a radio sitting on it. He switches the radio on, the volume low and the channel set to the classic rock station, the only station with music he's even remotely familiar with.

He sighs as some song by The Doors fills the air, putting his elbow on the armrest of the couch and resting his chin on his hand. He silently hopes the kid doesn't try to come inside his apartment. Will has the nagging feeling the boy has a crush on him, and quite frankly, that's the last thing Will wants to deal with.

Chapter End Notes

- tesoro - Italian - treasure
- passerotta - Italian - sparrow chick
- brangioji - Lithuanian - darling (feminine)
- Essere attaccato alle gonnelle della mamma - Italian - literal translation, "to be attached to one’s mother’s apron strings," but it more means, "to be dependant and still in need of one’s mother’s help"
- cucciolo - Italian - puppy
- tėvas - Lithuanian - father

If there's anything you feel I should add to the tags, please let me know! Thoughts, questions, constructive criticism? Drop me a comment!

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

> My process is usually draft, first and second edit, then final read-though. I was distracted tonight when doing the final read-through, so if there's any glaring errors that I missed please feel free to let me know either here in the comments or through DM on twitter (same username). Thanks everyone!
>
> CW: Child death.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Two grey 2010 Ford Taurus pull into the underground parking garage for the apartment complex as Hannibal jogs down the front steps, tucking the bloody handkerchief into his back pocket when he stands on the sidewalk before starting towards the corner store.

There's a woman with a friendly dog standing at the corner as she talks to a friend she had run into. As the preteen approaches, the small dog looks up to Hannibal and starts wagging its tail in excitement. The boy kneels next to the dog as its front paws jump up into his lap, Hannibal laughing softly as the dog licks his face.

After ten minutes of letting the boy pet and scratch the dog, the woman apologizes with a smile and says that she has to leave. Hannibal sighs but smiles up to her before standing, brushing off his jeans. He pulls open the door and disappears into the corner store, letting the door swing shut behind him.

Back at the underground parking garage, three men, Cordell, and then finally Mason walk out from the opening. All five men are dressed in suits, though they're all one department store brand or another at best. Two of the men are carrying Mossberg 590 Tactical shotguns tucked up under their suit jackets, the barrels sticking out at the bottom. The men make their way up the apartment building's front steps and quickly head inside.

Mason reaches into one of his pockets and takes out a metal Altoids tin as they walk, opening it and taking out two pills. Cordell happens to look over just in time to see the pills in the man's hand before Mason pops them into his mouth and chews them. The other man cursed before asking, "Didn't you take Adderall earlier? You shouldn't be taking Xanax right now, Mason. You're gonna give yourself a heart attack."

Mason shudders from the bitter taste of the pills before rolling his eyes at Cordell as the five men make their way up the stairwell, "My anxiety is a little high right now, Cordell. My psychiatrist tells me I need to watch my stress levels."

The other three men laugh while Cordell shakes his head in exasperation, "Mason, your anxiety wouldn't be so high if you didn't chew a 30mg pill an hour ago. You really gotta calm

down with abusing scripts, we're in the DEA, remember?"

"Yeah, Yeah. Geesh, why does Lecter have to live on the sixth floor? This is killing me!" Mason exclaims in irritation as they make their way up the steps.

One of the men looked back over his shoulder and muttered, "Boss, shouldn't we be quiet to avoid unwanted attention?"

Mason huffed and waved his hand by his head like he was swatting away a fly, "Fine."

The group stays silent the rest of the way up the stairwell. Once on the sixth floor, Mason looks over to Cordell with a grin as they walk down the hallway towards the intended apartment, "I like these calm moments, Cordell, right before the storm. It reminds me of classical music. You know, like Beethoven."

One man walks over to stand to the left of apartment 6B with a pistol in his hands as he clicks off the safety, knowing he would be the one to wait outside until they are finished. Cordell looks over at Mason with a smirk as he raises a brow, "I'm assuming you're going to play something for us, Mason?"

Mason grins again at Cordell, then yanks the shotgun from one of the other men's hands. The man is surprised but recovers quickly as he pulls a pistol out from his hip holster, switching the safety off while Mason aims at the locks, "Oh, I'm about to conduct a whole symphony."

Without another word, Mason fired the shotgun. The surrounding wood and the nearby door frame shatter, the door vibrating slightly open from the impact. The blonde starts pleasantly whistling a tune as pumps the gun then swings the busted door open, strutting inside the apartment. The other men hold their guns at the ready as they cautiously follow after the drugged man.

Mason sees a teenage girl jump up from the couch she had been hiding behind, running across the room in a panic shouting some weird word he doesn't know. He shoots in her direction but barely misses her as she ducks while screaming, then continues shouting that word he doesn't know as she resumes running. Mason follows after her as she turns down the hallway, the blonde man pumping the shotgun again before aiming. He shoots and hits the girl in the back, her bloody body dropping lifelessly to the floor with a thump. He grins then pumps the gun again.

Mason moseys through the apartment, whistling once again as he looks around. He enters the back bedroom, checking inside the closets and behind the door before walking back out. The blonde notices two closed doors, opening the first one and finding it to be a closet filled with linens and winter coats.

The drugged blonde then opens the second door as he continues whistling, stopping when he sees a woman with her eyes closed as she soaks in the bathtub. She's wearing a pair of headphones plugged into her cell phone that sits on the closed toilet beside the tub. Mason aims and fires at the woman's chest, killing her instantly as water and blood splash. He lays the barrel of the gun on one of his shoulders and strolls out of the bathroom while whistling again.

The blonde then checks the front bedroom, raising a curious brow at there being two beds. He checks behind the door then shrugs before walking back out, strutting down the hallway. The man carefully steps around the body of the teenage girl and the growing puddle of blood on the floor around her before making his way into the living room.

Mason moseys past both Cordell and the other two men as they all stand in the living room, sauntering right over to Hannibal in the corner of the kitchen as the older man stares in terror at Mason. The blonde comes to a stop two feet away from the older man and tilts his chin in, smiling widely as he looks over the rim of his glasses at Hannibal, laughing as he speaks, "I believe I told you twelve o'clock, friend."

The blonde makes a show out of lifting his wrist dramatically in front of him, shaking back his sleeve to look at his watch before looking back up over his glasses at Hannibal, informing him, "I've got one minute past."

Mason shrugs a little with a fake sympathetic look on his face, as if everything that just happened could have been easily prevented, "Hey, Hannibal, are you a fan of classical music?" The blonde pauses expectantly with a smile, but when he doesn't get a response after a few seconds he continues talking anyway, "My father raised me to appreciate classical music. I'm a big fan of Beethoven, you see. The powerful overtures really get my blood pumping!"

The terrified man jumps when Mason all but shouts the last five words while grabbing his shoulder. Hannibal looks quickly at the younger man's hand on his shoulder then back up at his face as Mason chuckles, "But you know what, after Beethoven's openings? If I'm being honest, the songs are actually a little boring… That's why I stopped, you see!"

Mason laughs heartily, Hannibal staring at him like he's insane. The blonde then looks back over his shoulder to Cordell before saying in an unamused tone, "Cordell, Marco, Barney; search the apartment. Trash the place if you have to."

As Mason continues rambling on about classical music to the petrified Hannibal, Cordell walks over to the couch and puts his pistol into his pocket. He pulls out a hunting knife then starts pulling off the cushions and stabs them open, before moving onto the pillows. He then checks the end table drawers, leaving them open as he goes. The man checks every nook and cranny in the living room before moving onto the kitchen, pulling open drawers and dumping them onto the floor.

Marco had walked down the hallway and into the parent's bedroom, pulling a hunting knife out of his pocket to stab the mattress open. He then does the same to the boxspring as he continues searching for the two kilos of missing heroin. The man proceeds to rummage through the closet, opening shoe boxes and purses and anything else that could possibly hold the missing drugs. He moves on to pulling out each drawer of their dresser, dumping them onto the ground and sifting through the clothing that was inside.

In the second bedroom, Barney dumps out all of the dresser drawers one by one, searching through the clothing as he goes. He then starts with the twin mattress and boxspring, stabbing both open as he looks for the heroin. The man then walks over to the full bed and stabs into the mattress first before starting on the boxspring.

When the boxspring lifts up as he rips the fabric back, a small form quickly scurries out from underneath the bed frame before trying to run out of the room. Already on edge and now startled by the unexpected movement, the man whips out his pistol and shoots the small creature twice, fearing it was a dog that was frightened and about to bite. It's only when he walks over to the small, dead body bleeding out on the floor that Barney awkwardly rubs the back of his neck, overwhelmed with guilt as he sighs over the realization that he's killed a small child.

Mason looks over his shoulder at the sound of gunshots deeper into the apartment and frowns before walking a few feet away from Hannibal, "What are you idiots doing? Who's shooting?"

At that moment, Hannibal snaps out of his frozen state and quickly reaches down between the wall and the oven to pull out a loaded Remington 870 shotgun. He quickly clicks off the safety and aims at Mason, who turns when he hears the safety disengage. Mason's eyes widen as he curses and drops to the ground, just as Hannibal fires. Hannibal takes the opportunity to try running, the shotgun still in hands. Mason snarls and aims, shooting the man in the thighs from where he was laying on the ground. Hannibal shouts in pain as he drops to the ground, the gun flying out of his hands and skidding across the floor as Mason stands again.

The blonde huffs in irritation as he blushes himself off, pumping his gun again before walking over to the older man groaning in pain on the floor that's trying to crawl away, "You almost shot me! And after I was so friendly with you in the kitchen, too! Honestly, you really have some nerve," the drugged blond says before shooting the man in the back, killing him.

Marco walks up to the front bedroom after he had finished searching the bathroom and notices the dead child on the floor, looking back at Barney who had started searching the linen closet a minute before. He asked louder than he meant to in his indignation, "What the hell, Barney? Why'd you kill a toddler?"

Outside on the sixth floor, Hannibal had been walking down the hallway when he quickly realized his apartment door was sitting wide open with some man he didn't know standing next to it, calmly holding a gun in his hands. Hannibal tensed and kept head down with his eyes on the floor, his pace steady as he walked past the open door just as Marco's voice carried out from inside when asking why Barney killed a toddler.

Inside apartment 6D, Will had immediately turned off the radio and had been watching through the peephole of his front door with a loaded pistol in hand, silencer attached, since he heard them shoot the front door of apartment 6B. Will's eyes widen as Hannibal comes up the steps and walks down the hall, watching the boy's youthfully narrow shoulders tensing as he gets closer. He sees Hannibal's face screw up with grief when they hear about a child being dead, the boy continuing towards Will's door before pressing the man's doorbell.

Will clenches his jaw and doesn't move to open his front door at first, not wanting to get involved in this clusterfuck of a mess. He then hears the boy softly mumble the word, 'please' under his breath before ringing the doorbell twice in a row. Will curses and puts the gun in his back waistband then unlocks the deadbolt and pulls the door open quickly.

Hannibal rushes inside as Will glares at the man standing by the door of apartment 6B, who had been looking at Hannibal curiously. Will shuts the door and re-locks the deadbolt, pausing before locking the doorknob and chain lock that he never bothers with for good measure.

Back in apartment 6B, Barney rubbed the back of his neck again as he paused his search of the linen closet to look up at Marco, "I didn't mean to shoot her, she just came out of nowhere. I thought it was a dog or something, I didn't want to get bit."

Mason pumps the gun again and shoots the dead man on the floor again as Marco continues down the hall towards him, making a face, "Geeze, Mason. Let it go, he's not getting any deader."

"He was being rude, Marco. And he got blood on my suit. I'm going to have to get changed before we go back!" The drugged man stated as if it was obvious as he looked over the rim of his glasses before pumping the gun. He then slides the glasses up his nose and looks over to Cordell, "Why haven't any of you found my dope yet? My bedroom closet is bigger than this apartment."

Barney was almost finished tossing the linen closet, kneeling on the floor to look through three stacks of winter boot boxes. He opens them one by one, eight boxes having boots of various sizes in them like he expected-- until the last one, which had two packaged kilos of heroin inside. He grins and grabs the packages, standing up and looking at Mason, "Bingo! I found them, Mr. Verger!"

Mason looks down the hall with a grin as he shoves his shotgun into Marco's hands, then claps once loudly with excitement, "Barney, you're absolutely radiant! I could kiss you right now, but you're not a woman and I'm not a homosexual. Alright, let's get the heck out of here, boys!"

The men all laugh as they walk to and out the front door, Cordell and Mason in the rear. Cordell pauses, looking at the picture frames on a table by the door, "Hey Mason, there's three kids in these pictures. You shot the older one, Barney killed the little girl. The boy's missing."

The other men are already making their way down the hallway, Mason turning around to walk back into the hallway as he rolls his eyes, puts his hands on his hips as he looks at Cordell, "The twerp is probably at school, who cares?"

"I just think that maybe we shouldn't leave any loose ends, Mason. We did kill the rest of the family, after all. Vendettas are a pain," Cordell cautions.

Mason shrugs and turns back around, walking into the hallway as sirens start to echo in the distance, "We'll deal with it when and if the kid turns up. The local precinct is almost here, we gotta go. Matteo, stay here."

The man still standing at the left of the door looks at Mason in confusion as the other men walk towards the stairwell. Matteo had never entered the apartment, so he has only a vague idea at best of what happened in there from eavesdropping, and had an even vaugier idea of

what story Mason wanted spun in place of the truth, "Wait, Mr. Verger, what the hell am I supposed to tell them when they get here?"

Mason stopped walking as the others continued down the steps. He turns slowly and looks at the man with dangerous eyes, quietly spitting out, "Tell them we were doing our job."

The two men stare at each other for a moment before Mason's face splits back into its usual grin, the blonde turning back around walking to the steps as he waves one hand in the air, "Catch you later at the office, Matteo!"

Inside apartment 6D, the pair quietly sit at Will's table as they carefully listen to the conversation in the hall. Will's arms are crossed with his gun still in hand, his eyes narrowed and glued to the door. Hannibal is sitting in the chair across from Will, staring down at the table with tears silently sliding down his cheeks as he fidgets numbly with Will's handkerchief. The bags of groceries that Hannibal had purchased earlier at the corner store lay forgotten on the table between them.

After hearing nothing but silence from outside of Will's apartment for over five minutes, and the sirens of the local police now echoing loudly into their neighborhood, Will clicks the safety back on his gun and places it gently down onto the table in front of himself.

The blue eyed man stands and takes the grocery bags to the kitchen, placing them on the counter before looking through them. He takes out all of the items that need to be kept cold and puts them into the fridge, then puts the rest in his pantry cabinet. He opens the fridge again to take out his carton of milk, then walks over to the dish rack to grab two glasses and places the glasses on the counter. He pours milk into them before putting the carton back in the fridge, then carries the glasses to the table and places one in front of Hannibal.

Will sits back in his seat as he places his own glass of milk down, looking the preteen in the face as he frowns with deep concern, "What's your name?"

"Hannibal Lecter," the boy mumbles out as he looks up to Will, "The eighth; it's a family name."

Will nods a bit, "I'm sorry about what happened to your family. I didn't really know your father--"

"He was rude, a liar, and abusive. If someone else didn't do it, I would have eventually done it myself," Hannibal snaps angrily as resentment burns like a fire in his young eyes.

Will blinks in surprise but nods in acceptance, then says, "Sorry then about your mother--"

"She just let him hit me; she would complain about it and criticize him, but never actually try to make it stop. That's participation. And my older sister Bedelia was just as bad as my father," Hannibal cuts him off, continuing to seethe in his loathing.

Will frowns as he purses his lips in confusion, eyeing the preteen warily for a moment before asking, "If you hated them so much, then why are you crying?"

"Because they killed Mischa! She was my baby sister, she just turned four years old a week ago. She was a happy little girl, always smiling. She only ever cried when I was hurt, not even when she had nightmares or was hurt herself. I was more of a parent to her than either of ours ever were. And those rabid dogs killed her," Hanninal said quickly, grief stricken tears flowing down his young face as he tried not to sob.

Will was at a loss of what to do as the boy spoke, never being very good at comforting others or dealing with children. He looks away and sighs softly, "You shouldn't talk negatively about dogs. Even when starved, ill, and abused, they'll hesitantly still seek out a cruel master's kindness and love. However, a well trained and well kept dog will happily die protecting it's beloved master."

Hannibal looked up to Will quietly for a long moment, the man picking up his glass of milk and taking a sip. Hannibal silently wonders if Will considered himself in the role of the dog or the master in his own life. The preteen dismissed the thought before asking, "What's your name?"

Will looks at the boy then answers, "Graham. Uh, it's Will. Just Will," before looking away and drinking more of his milk.

"Will, then. Cute name," Hannibal says, a small smile growing on his tear stained face.

Will immediately chokes on his milk, it splashing everywhere which makes Hannibal chuckle as Will coughs. The brunette then wipes his face and clears his throat as he puts the glass down, looking away and frowning as a dusting of blush sits on his cheeks. He speaks finally with a hoarse voice, "Do you have any family left? Anywhere you could go? I could help you get there safely, given the situation."

Hannibal's smile falls and he shakes his head a little, "No family state-side. Mamma was an immigrant from Italy and Tėvas was an immigrant from Lithuania. None of them ever visited, so I've never met any family other than the ones I lived with; and you've seen the kind of friends my parents kept."

Will sits back in his chair as he wraps one arm around his waist while rubbing his eyes and sighing deeply through his nose, then stands and speaks as he walks away, "Give me a second to think, okay?"

Hannibal watches as the brunette goes into the kitchen, leaning back against the counter as he rubs his face with both hands before crossing his arms and staring at the floor silently. The preteen tilts his head, curiously wondering what was running through the man's mind for a moment, before getting bored.

The preteen looks down at the gun across from him on the table, then at the two near-identical cases on the table pressed back against the wall. He recognized the one to the left, which had some wear and tear unlike the one to the right, as the case Will was always carrying.

His curiosity resparked, the boy opened the case to the left. Hannibal's eyes immediately widen when he sees that the case is packed with guns, boxes of ammunition, silencers, loaded

magazines, knives of varying sizes and types, smoke canisters, and military-grade pin grenades.

Will hears the familiar sound of one of the cases opening and his eyes widen, immediately realizing what Hannibal's seen before he even looks up. The man quickly crosses the room, sitting again before gently pulling the boy's hands away and closing the case. The man's voice is soft as he refuses to look at Hannibal, "Don't touch that, please. You weren't supposed to open that."

Hannibal stares at Will intensely, wishing the man would just look at him. The preteen asks, his curiosity starting to spiral out of control, "Will, what exactly is it that you do for a living?"

"Cleaner," the man says quietly before clearing his throat, still refusing to look at the boy as he sits back in his chair and crosses his arms.

"Wait, do you mean to say that you're a contract killer? Sincerely?" Hannibal asks, trying to keep the admiration and excitement out of his voice but falls short when faced with Will's careful ear. The man blinks then looks at the preteen with narrowed eyes.

"Yes, I do. I am," the man answers cautiously, confused by the boy's tone.

Hannibal smiles, "Fascinating," he then raises a brow while leaning forward as he folds his arms on the table, the boy's interest making Will frown. The preteen asks, "Do you make contracts to kill anyone?"

"No," Will replies slowly, then continues, "First off, I don't make contracts directly, clients go through my broker to protect my anonymity. Second, no one underage. That's my one rule. I'm the only cleaner under my broker with that rule, and that's their prerogative."

The boy frowns but nods, "How much would it cost to hire someone to kill those pigs that killed Mischa?"

Will purses his lips silently for a few seconds as he searches Hannibal's face, then leans forward and folds arms on the table before replying, "My price is five grand a head. So, hypothetically speaking, this contract would cost someone twenty-five grand."

The preteen blinks in surprise, "That's it? That's all five lives are worth?"

Will scoffs, looking away, "I'm more affordable than the other cleaners' under my broker. It's an intentional, competitive price to tempt them into choosing me over the others. I'm also significantly more efficient than the others, with a low failure rate and enough skill to never leave any evidence. So clients prefer me. After my broker takes his cut, I usually make anywhere from fifty to one-hundred grand a month, depending on the size and frequency of contracts."

Hannibal stares at the brunette in shock, then looks around the man's apartment suspiciously, "If you make all that money, then why don't you have a television? Or even a bookshelf?"

Will huffs as he rolls his eyes, sitting back in his chair as he crosses his arms again, "Television will rot your brain if you watch it too often. I go to see a movie once every one or two weeks, that's enough visual media for me. As for books, I go to the library; I won't waste money on something I won't read a second time. It's pretentious if you ask me, having shelves full of books just to prove you've read them."

The sandy blonde looks back to the blue eyed man with amusement in his eyes. The boy sits back in his chair and crosses his arms, mimicking Will's posture which earns a raised brow from the man as Hannibal speaks with a smirk, "Consider this: I'll do things around here to earn my keep, and in exchange, you'll teach me how to clean. What do you think?"

Will's face falls in disbelief as he blinks at the preteen. Hannibal takes the lack of response as a response and continues, "I'll do the shopping. I'll clean everything, every day. I'll do both of our laundry. I'll even cook; I'm really good at it. Is it a deal?"

Will is silent for another few seconds before running his hand through his hair, Hannibal seeing a scar that starts near his ear and goes halfway across the man's forehead which had always been covered by his curls, saying incredulously, "What? No. It's not a deal. You're what, eleven? I'm not teaching you how to kill."

"I'm twelve..!" The boy says sharply but quietly as he sits up straighter, blinking quickly as his eyes begin to burn. The preteen swallows and looks away for a few seconds then looks back at Will, his voice cracking from emotion as he speaks, "What am I supposed to do? I don't have anyone, and I don't know where to go."

Will sighs and looks away, speaking softly, "Look, kid. You've admittedly had an awfully rough day today, putting it mildly," the man looks over to the clock and sees that it's barely past two in the afternoon, "How about you take a nap for now, alright? You must be exhausted from the emotional stress. I'll wake you when it's time for dinner?"

Hannibal looks at the man as Will looks back at him with his impossibly blue eyes and hesitantly nods. Will stands and motions for the boy to follow him, then leads the boy down the hall towards the bedroom. The brunette pauses to open the linen closet, grabbing clean sheets and pillowcases before closing the closet door. The man continues leading the preteen down the hall and into the bedroom.

Hannibal looks around the nearly empty, undecorated room curiously as the man pulls the duvet and pillows off the bed, placing them on the dresser for a moment. The brunette then strips the bed of the current sheets before putting on the clean fitted sheet and top sheet, laying the duvet on top. He then changes out the pillowcases before laying them on the bed as well, taking the dirty linens and dropping them into the hamper before looking over to the boy.

"Okay, it's good now. Dinner's usually around six thirty, unless you normally eat at a specific time?" Will asks.

Hannibal shakes his head as he smiles a little, his heart warming with a fluttering feeling in his stomach at the idea that someone would care enough to disrupt their own schedule to accommodate him, "No, thank you. Six thirty is fine, Will,"

The brunette nods and walks to the doorway before looking back at the preteen, hesitating to leave as he watches Hannibal pull back the blankets and sit on the bed. The preteen unlaces his converses and takes them off, sitting them neatly beside the bed. The boy then lays down and pulls the covers up to his neck before looking over to Will, feeling sleep creeping in on him. The bed was incredibly comfortable; it was much softer than his own bed, yet his body felt much more supported as well. He wondered if it had been more expensive, too.

"Hey, Will?" the boy softly asks.

"Hm?"

"Thanks for being kind to me… Most people aren't," the boy says sleepily, before closing his eyes and snuggling into the pillow as he pulls the blankets tighter around himself.

Will narrows his eyes before quietly leaving the room. The man walks down the hallway and into the living room, pulling his chair over to the window to sit with his arms folded on the windowsill as he stares down at the world below to people-watch for a while. Usually, this passes the time and distracts him on days that he doesn't have a book from the library to read.

After about an hour Will rests his chin on his arms, accidentally finding himself nodding off from the soothing warmth of the sun's rays on his face and the aglaonema leaves tickling his ear. Soon, he finds himself in a dream where he's standing in the middle of his dark apartment with one arm restraining the young form of a struggling Hannibal tightly, the boy's back pressed to Will's chest as the brunette holds a hunting knife to the writhing boy's throat.

"I know you're scared," he softly whispers, attempting to soothe the terrified boy in his hold as the preteen whimpers and pleads for his life, "You only have to be scared a moment longer," Will then grins as he rips the blade savagely across the boy's delicate throat, the arterial spray painting Will's living room in red as the man lets the trembling body sink to his knees before he lays on the floor.

Will then kneels down in the growing puddle of blood surrounding the boy, which feels wet and warm and real as it soaks into his pants. He strokes the boy's cheek gently as the light leaves his beautiful chestnut eyes while his pupils dilate.

Will startles awake, his breathing heavy as he's covered in sweat. He hears the rocking of his aglaonema plant's pot on the windowsill and his reflexes kicking in, quickly grabbing the pot before it can fall out the window from him bumping it when he had jolted upright in his seat.

The man sits back in his chair and rubs his face with both hands while sighing heavily, then stands and pushes the chair back to its proper place. He takes the plant and puts it on the table before closing the window. The brunette then walks to the kitchen and fills a coffee mug with water, returning to the table and pouring just the right amount into the dirt. He then walks back to the kitchen and dumps the rest of the water, placing the mug back in the dish rack.

Will leans forward and grips the edges of the countertop, clenching his jaw as he thinks about his dream then looks over to the clock which reads quarter to five. Will rubs his face yet again with both hands, stopping as he covers his face and takes a deep breath then lets it out. He then pushes his hands back through his hair, then follows the back of his head and holds

the back of his neck. His closed eyes snap open, blue eyes cold as he walks over to his case and opens it. He takes out one of his pistols and loads it with a magazine before quickly screwing on a silencer.

The few conversations he's had with the boy echo through Will's skull, screaming that this child has known next to nothing but suffering and pain in his very short life. The man clicks off the safety as he stalks down the hallway and into the bedroom, not stopping until he's standing beside Hannibal as he lay peacefully and innocently asleep. Will aims the gun at the preteen's head, convinced from his own personal experiences that killing the boy right now would be a mercy, rather than throwing him to the gutters of the foster system.

A minute passes. Then two. Then three.

After five minutes, Will's eyes widen as he realizes his hand is shaking, clenching his teeth in frustration at his inability to pull the trigger and save this boy. He quickly looks away then stalks back out of the room just as quickly as came in. As he makes his way back to the table, he switches back on the safety, screws off the silencer, then takes out the magazine. He quickly puts everything away, then rubs his eyes with one hand with his other hand on his hip before looking over to see the clock only says five pm.

The man groans softly then slowly paces the living room for about ten minutes, his arms crossed as he tries to decide what to do with the kid. He can't bring himself to kill Hannibal, but he also can't just let some innocent live here while he kills people, either. Besides, Will had one of the small apartments for their building. It only has one bedroom in the four-hundred and fifty square feet, and while he knows his small apartment isn't the smallest New York City has to offer, it still isn't exactly the picture of an all-American white-picket fence dream home.

Will sighed for what felt like the millionth time today before pulling out one of the chairs at the table and sits, opening one of the cases. He starts the cleaning and oiling routine for his guns, despite not having used any of them today. The brunette usually waits until after dinner to do this, but his schedule was already fucked today anyway. Right now, the man desperately needs both a distraction and something to keep himself busy until it's late enough to start cooking dinner.

The blue eyed man quickly but carefully takes gun after gun apart, cleaning and oiling them before putting them back together. He occasionally checks the time, being mindful of how much longer he has to spare. To waste. Eventually, he looks and the clock reads a few minutes past six as he finishes one of his guns. Will puts it away and closes the case. He didn't finish them, or get to the silencers, but since he hadn't actually used them today it didn't actually matter.

The man stands and pushes his chair in before walking into the kitchen. He sets two plates on the counter and makes two lunch meat sandwiches, leaving the boy's sandwich dry from mayo or mustard since he didn't know the kid's preference. He cuts his own sandwich in half out of preference, but hesitates when he goes to cut the boy's, worried that Hannibal will think he's treating him like a child. Will purses his lips before silently chastising himself for overthinking, cutting the sandwich.

Will takes a can of soup out of the pantry cabinet and grabs the pot from the dish rack, placing the pot on the stove and turning the burner on. He opens the soup and pours the soup in before dropping the empty can into his recycling bin. He then takes two bowls and spoons out, setting them on the counter.

He picks up the plates and brings them into the living room, placing his own at the chair he sat at earlier and Hannibal's where the boy sat. Will then returns to the kitchen and grabs the mayo and mustard he left out on the counter, as well as the knife from cutting the sandwiches. He brings them and places the condiments on the table, the knife sitting on top of the closed mayo jar.

The brunette goes back to the kitchen and leans back against the counter, sighing through his nose as he taps on the countertops on either side of his hips while waiting for the soup to heat. When it's finally slightly boiling, Will turns that burner off quickly then pours half of the soup into each bowl carefully, making sure not to spill or splash any of the hot liquid.

After washing the pot and putting it in the dish rack, Will carries the two hot bowls with spoons dipped in over to the table and places them beside the plates. He walks back to the kitchen one last time and places four glasses on the counter, filling two with cold water and two with milk. Carrying two glasses carefully in each hand, the man returns to the table and places them down gently, putting one of each beside the settings. He then grabs some napkins from a stack on the table, putting them by each plate. The brunette then looks out the window at the setting sun before walking over to the end table and switching on the lamp in the corner of the room.

Will then looks over to the clock to see that it's twenty past six and begins making his way down the hallway. He walks into the room and over to the bed again, this time sitting on the edge beside the sleeping preteen. The boy's face looks so relaxed and at peace that Will almost feels guilty waking him, but food is important and Hannibal can go back to sleep after he eats. Will places his hand on the sandy blonde's shoulder and gently rocks it as he speaks softly, "Hey, it's time for dinner."

The boy squeezes his eyes tight as he buries his face into the pillow, whining softly. Will can't help but chuckle a little before speaking softly again, "Come on, Hannibal. It's time to get up, you can go back to sleep afterwards."

The boy slowly opens his eyes, blinking a few times as he looks around the room with furrowed brows before his eyes finally settle on Will, his face immediately relaxing again as he softly says, "I'm up."

Will nods as the boy yawns, then stands as he says, "Good, come on, then. Before the soup gets cold," then walks out of the bedroom.

Hannibal pushes the blankets into his lap as he sits up, stretching his arms over his head as he moans softly. He then pulls the blankets off completely before getting out of the bed, the preteen walking out the room and to the bathroom to relieve himself. When he comes out a moment later, his hair is neater and he's drying his wet hands on his pants as slowly makes his way to the living room. The boy stops in the doorway when he sees Will is already seated but waiting for him, his arms folded on the edge of the table.

Will looks over and smiles reassuringly at Hannibal, waving the boy over, "Come on, eat. I know it's no five star restaurant, but it'll keep your strength up."

The boy nods and walks over, pulling his chair out and sitting quietly. He eyes the tomato soup, then checks the ham and cheese sandwich to see if there's anything on it before looking at the condiments on the table. He then up at Will as he asks, "Do you have cranberry horseradish sauce?"

Will had just lifted a spoonful of soup to his mouth as Hannibal spoke, lowering it slightly as he blinked in confusion, "I didn't even know that was a thing, if I'm being completely honest."

Hannibal shrugs and picks up half of his sandwich, stating boredly as he looks over to his soup, "It's tart, spicy, and has a touch of sweetness. It compliments the combination of salty umami and creaminess well of say, lunch meat ham and cheese."

Will blinks again as the boy takes a bite of his sandwich and chews. Will huffs and finds himself smiling a bit, then looks down as he starts eating his soup. After Hannibal finishes that half of his sandwich, he pulls the bowl closer and lifts the spoon, blowing on it for a few seconds before putting the spoonful into his mouth and swallowing. The boy pouts a bit, before standing and walking into Will's kitchen.

Will blinks in surprise as he watches the boy go through his cabinets, standing on his tiptoes to look up at the taller shelves. The preteen puts his hands on his hips and looks back over his shoulder at Will, exasperation on his face, "Will, where are your spices?"

The brunette rubs the back of his neck as he looks away, suddenly embarrassed for some reason, "I uh, I don't have any."

The preteen's face falls and he just stares blankly at Will for a moment, before repeating in disbelief, "You don't have any spices."

The man clears his throat and folds his arms, "I don't really cook much. I make eggs, toast, sandwiches, and soups. I don't need seasonings."

Hannibal rubs his eyes and suddenly Will feels his cheeks heat up, "Will, that's not a rounded diet, that doesn't even have any meat or vegetables," he shakes his head then walks back to sit again, "I'll see if I can sneak back into our apartment tomorrow and take my parents' seasonings. They don't need them anymore, anyway."

Will points at the boy, speaking firmly, "Absolutely not. After I get back from seeing my broker tomorrow, we'll figure out what you're doing but that doesn't include sneaking back into a crime scene that's being actively investigated. Get that out of your head, right now. I have plenty of money, so I can buy my own seasonings."

Hannibal looks up to Will for a few seconds before nodding silently. Will looks away as the boy starts eating again, already feeling bad for being stern with him, "Look, I'm sorry for yelling at you. I'm not your parent, it's not my place to rear you."

The preteen stops before taking his next bite and looks up with a small smile then shaking his head, "You never yelled, Will. Or even raised your voice, for that matter. I said something foolish, and you corrected me. You did the right thing, you don't have to feel guilty for that."

The boy looks down again as he takes another bite of his sandwich. After a few minutes of the man just sitting there in silence and the sandy blonde feeling the man's eyes on him, Hannibal swallows the food in his mouth. Without looking up, the preteen softly says, "Finish your dinner."

Will narrows his eyes as the boy takes another bite of sandwich but nods silently, looking down at his own soup for a few seconds before starting to eat again. At the sound of the man's spoon hitting the bowl, a pleased smile creeps onto the boy's face as he chews the last bite of his sandwich.

It seems that Will fits the role of the dog rather than the master after all, then.

Chapter End Notes

If there's anything you feel I should add to the tags, please let me know! Thoughts, questions, constructive criticism? Drop me a comment!

Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Hannibal hears the sound of the apartment's front door shut and groans softly, turning from laying on his back onto his side while rubbing his eyes. He opens one chestnut eye sleepily to look at the alarm clock, it reading ten past seven in the morning in bright blue numbers. Hannibal had left the bedroom door open last night, so he can hear Will moving around faintly down the hall in the living room.

Even though the boy wants to lay forever in Will's incredibly comfortable bed, which still smells faintly of the man in the best way despite the brunette changing the sheets, the preteen sighs and pushes back the blankets before sitting up. Hannibal stretches his arms over his head as he yawns before finally standing and walking from the bedroom to the bathroom to relieve himself.

A few minutes later, the boy walks down the hall as he dries his hands on his jeans. He looks over to Will in the kitchen once he enters the living room, "You should put a hand towel in the bathroom for guests, so they don't have to choose between drying their hands on your bath towel or on their clothes."

Will turns to look at the boy with a raised eyebrow, "Other than my broker, you're the only guest I've had in my apartment in the past thirteen years. And my broker never stays long enough to use the bathroom."

Hannibal blinks in surprise at that, "Don't you have a girlfriend, boyfriend, family or friends? Something?"

Will shakes his head as he takes the frying pan from the dish rack and puts it on the burner, turning it on before grabbing the butter and carton of eggs from the fridge. With a sigh, the man admits, "My life isn't suitable for a relationship. Or rather, I'm not suitable. And no biological family left; mom died during childbirth, dad died when I was a kid from liver disease. I grew up in the foster system."

Hannibal had turned the chair so he could sit facing Will, arms wrapped around the back of the chair as his eyes softened while paying attention to the man. The brunette continued talking while buttering the pan and cracking two eggs into it, "I bounced from home to home for a while, the parents and other kids alike would take their frustrations out on me because I was different and they couldn't handle that."

The preteen felt a growing kinship with the man, now understanding why Will appeared so empathetic about his abuse before, "I eventually got to Ms. Pimms' house; she still didn't understand me, but she at least tried to do right by me. She's dead now. I did have a foster sister that I was close with during that time, who I stayed close to afterwards as well, but I cut ties for her safety when I went into the business."

A frown had begun to settle on the preteen's face, only continuing to grow the more the man talked. Will put bread into the toaster, pushing the lever down as Hannibal asks, "Let me guess, no friends anywhere to be found, either… You're as alone as I am, then."

Will pauses for a moment to look up, his blue eyes holding chestnut eyes for a few seconds before turning away to grab the spatula and a plate from the dish rack. He turns back to flip the eggs and lets them cook for another minute before scooping them onto the plate, musing idly, "I'm not sure why I'm even telling you all of this."

Hannibal shrugs as he watches Will put the plate down just as the toast pops. The man takes the toast and butters it, the preteen suggesting with a small smile, "Maybe it's because you don't actually want me to leave."

Will huffs as he pours a glass of milk then puts the butter, eggs, and milk back into the fridge before bringing the glass of milk, plate of breakfast, and a fork over to place in front of Hannibal. The man then walks back to the kitchen, cleaning the pan and spatula as he speaks, "Don't get confused, kid. After breakfast, we're figuring out what to do with you, then you're gone."

The preteen pouts as he turns his chair to sit properly at the table then takes a bite of toast, chewing as he thinks. He swallows and looks up as Will walks back into the living room, sitting across from Hannibal, "I don't know what there is for you personally to figure out, Will, but I know what I want to do with my life. I want to clean, and I want you to show me."

Will looked at the boy in irritation before quickly opening the case on the right, taking out a pistol, a magazine, and a box of bullets. He slaps them down in the center of the table then looks at the boy with piercing eyes, "You want to clean? Fine, here; go clean. I'm not some mentor, I don't take apprentices. I work alone."

"Bonnie and Clyde didn't work alone, Thelma and Louise didn't work alone," Hannibal says petulantly as he folds his arms on the table.

"Thelma and Louise weren't even real? And those are both couples? You need to calm down, you're a kid, remember?" Will criticizes, running a hand through his hair in frustration.

"You must have saved my life for a good reason. If you send me off, you'll never know what happened to me. I may end up under some other abusive man's fists. I may even end up dead, and it'll be as if you never opened your door at all," Hannibal challenges, glaring at the older man.

Will sighs and leans forward, folding his arms on the table as he looks at the boy firmly, "Don't take this the wrong way, but I don't think you have it in you. You're just an innocent, little boy who just lost his sister. You're sad and angry, but I don't think you'd ever actually pull the trigger."

The preteen frowns then looks at the pile in the center of the table for a few quiet minutes before looking up at Will, who was still staring him down. Hannibal looks down at the gun again and tilts his chin up while narrowing his eyes, before quickly grabbing both gun and

magazine. He loads it and then as Will watches with mesmerized eyes, the boy swiftly steps over to the open window while clicking the safety off.

Hannibal shoots down into the street six times in rapid succession, not hitting anyone, though a few people down below do scream in fear as bullets strike parked cars and street signs. The sandy blonde goes back to his seat again, sitting as he clicks back on the safety then slaps the gun on the table. He stares defiantly at the man across from him, whose mouth is sitting slightly open.

Will blinks once before sitting back in his chair, one arm wrapping around his waist as the other hand rubs his mouth. His hand doesn't, however, hide the smile on his lips from Hannibal. Nor could it possibly hide the mirth shining in the man's blue eyes.

"Don't… Don't ever do that again," Will says simply as he huffs out a few laughs, sounding strangely pleased by the turn of events. Hannibal can't help but smile, despite quickly realizing he was so easily manipulated into action. The man continues as he crosses his arms, no longer bothering to cover his smile, "If you do something so unprofessional again, I'm dropping you quicker than a bag of dead shellfish."

"The threat to drop me implies you've already picked me up. Am I your apprentice now, Will?" Hannibal asks as he tilts his head, nearly bursting at the seams with excitement at the very idea.

Will nods, then motions to the boy's plate, "Yes, Hannibal. Now please, eat. Though, your eggs are probably cold."

Hannibal smiles again before digging into his food, Will watching the boy with a small smile on his own face. Seeing the usually dejected preteen look so happy was making the brunette's chest feel warm. When the sandy blonde finishes, Will stands and takes his dirty dishes to the kitchen.

The chestnut eyed boy turns again in his chair to watch as Will washes, unable to stop smiling as he asks, "So, how does this work, Will? Are you going to show me first-hand, or teach me theory only?"

Will finishes and dries his hands on the cloth towel from the counter, then starts speaking while walking back over to the table, "Remote training while learning theory. Then when your physical strength is enough to hold your own against a grown adult, you'll start to learn first-hand experience."

Hannibal smiles in excitement, "When do we start? Now?"

The blue eyed man laughs heartily, patting the boy's shoulder, "Nope, though I like your enthusiasm. We start tomorrow morning at three am. Today, we'll go to the grocery store. There's only one place nearby I can still go to that doesn't have cameras or metal detectors. Then to get you some new clothes. Limited options there, too, for the same reasons."

Hannibal wrinkles his nose at the idea of waking up at three am, but then frowns at the comment about clothing, "What's wrong with my old clothes?"

Will rolls his eyes as he walks over to his harnesses, beginning to slip them on as he speaks, "Other than being stuck in an active crime scene, nothing. The androgynous look is fine, if you're a civilian. But I'm willing to bet you got more than your fair share of both positive and negative attention, and cleaners are ghosts. You need to be as invisible as possible."

The preteen sighs and folds his arms on the table before resting his chin on them, mumbling petulantly, "Then how does someone that looks like you get away with being a cleaner? You're too beautiful to not notice."

Will stops as he's opening the case on the right, a dusting of blush on his cheeks as he shoots the boy a stern look, "I'm serious, kid. If you want me to teach you, you need to act like a professional. Comments like that are what people in most workplaces call sexual harassment, alright?"

Hannibal pouts as he nods while sitting up straight again, "I apologize, Will. I'll behave myself."

Will sighs while rubbing the back of his neck then opens the case and goes through the motions of loading magazines into the guns, screwing on silencers, and putting the guns in holsters. He then slips the hunting knives into their holsters, the gas cans and pin grenades into theirs. When he finishes, he slips on his peacoat, taking his glasses out of his breast pocket and putting them on.

The preteen stands as he watches Will button his coat then tie the sash, "If we're just going to some stores, then why are you suited up as if you're going on a job?"

The man frowns for a moment as he takes his keys out of his pocket, "It's not like I'm bringing my case with me," Hannibal gives him a critical look, which makes Will roll his eyes, "I never leave the apartment without my base gear. Every now and then, a client tells me to let someone live. Or the hit has family. Either way, there's always a chance that there's someone out there looking for retribution."

The brunette walks over to an air vent and kneels down to it, opening it. The preteen watches then blinks in surprise when he realizes it's a fake vent, seeing the man take out two envelopes. Hannibal looks into the fake vent again, noticing a few more envelopes.

The boy then watches Will take out a stack of money with a sealed brown paper tape on it from the first envelope, then put it back inside. Will then takes a much smaller stack of unbound bills from the second envelope and counts them quickly, humming before putting the money back. The man then stuffs both envelopes into his breast pocket before closing the vent and standing again.

Hannibal looks up at the man as he walks to the door and unlocks the deadbolt, "Will I get to keep hidden weapons on me soon?"

Will huffs out a small laugh while shaking his head, holding the door open for the preteen to pass through, "Not for a while, kid. Don't worry, I'll keep you safe."

The boy walks out into the hall then turns around to face the man, "Is that a promise, Will? Before you say yes, know that I always keep my promises. So I will expect you to keep yours, if you make any."

The blue eyed man pauses to look over his shoulder at the chestnut eyed boy, who is staring at him intensely. Will looks forward again to lock the deadbolt and door knob before turning around, getting down on one knee in front of Hannibal with his forearm resting on his knee. The brunette looks the preteen in the eyes as he whispers, almost as much to himself as it is to the boy, "It's a promise, Hannibal. I'll always protect you, so long as I'm alive."

Hannibal searches the man's face to try to find the lie, but finds only sincerity in his blue eyes. He smiles a little and nods, "We should go clothes shopping first, so we don't have to waste time doubling back to drop off the food."

Will smiles a little while looking away, nodding as he stands and walks around Hannibal, "You've got a point, kid. Come on."

The two of them walk quietly down the stairwell then out of the building, Hannibal staying by Will's side as they make their way through the city. The brunette stops in front of a men's clothing boutique, called Folie à Deux, and opens the door for Hannibal. The preteen looks at the name of the boutique curiously then at the man himself before walking inside. Will follows after him as the shopkeeper greets him by name with a smile, greeting her pleasantly with a smile in return as the door swings shut behind them.

Hannibal notices immediately that there isn't a metal detector at the front door, unlike most stores. Curiously confident against theft, making him wonder about the boutique's price-point. He looks around the boutique, seeing beautifully made clothing in every style, color and pattern as Will makes small talk with the shopkeeper about someone named Margot. The boy starts looking through one of the racks of button down shirts, overhearing Will lie to the woman that Hannibal was his nephew.

The blue eyed woman Will had been talking to walks over to the preteen with a pleasant smile, her hands folded together in front of her and a measuring tape draped in half over her neck, "Hi, Hannibal. I'm Alana, the owner. Your uncle asked me to help you pick out some clothes."

Hannibal nodded to the woman, who seemed nice enough. He looked to Will, who seemed to be browsing idly as the preteen asked, "How much am I allowed to spend?"

The blue eyed man shrugs a little, tilting his head side to side for a moment, "Seven shirts, seven pairs of pants, a fall coat, fourteen undershirts, fourteen pairs of underwear, fourteen pairs of socks, seven sets of workout clothes, a pair of running sneakers, one or two belts, a pair of dress shoes, and seven pairs of pyjamas."

Alana quickly looks at Will and blinks a few times in shock, her mouth falling open with a quiet, "Oh." Hannibal looks at her in amusement. Clearly they had not discussed how much Will had intended to spend when they were speaking earlier. The woman recovers, "I knew you said he was coming to live with you, Will, but I didn't realize--"

"I said he needs new clothes, Alana," Will replies with a polite smile, "Thank you again for your assistance, it's always greatly appreciated."

Alana nods and smiles back, clearly trying to hold back her excitement over having such a large purchase pending so early in the day, "Of course, Will. You're a loyal customer, I'm always happy to help."

She turns her attention back to Hannibal, who is looking through the button down shirts again, "I know this might sound silly, but do you want me to measure you to see what sizes will fit you best?"

Hannibal frowns a little and looks up at the woman, considering her offer for a moment, "Is it different from other clothing sizes?"

Alana smiles politely, "A little bit. Since Will said you need the clothes today, we won't be going the tailored route. But the ready-made clothes have slim-fit and tapered-cut options. Also, since you're still growing, it would be best to redo your inseam measurement at the very least."

The preteen purses his lips, looking to Will with uncertainty, who was luckily eavesdropping. Will nods slightly, so Hannibal looks back to Alana and nods as well. Alana smiles, "Good, I'm a practiced hand so I promise this will only take a few minutes."

The brunette woman takes a small notepad and pen out from her back pocket with one hand, then takes the ends of the measuring tape in both hands. She quickly guides Hannibal how to stand as she takes measurements and writes them down, speaking out loud while she takes them, "Shoulders, fourteen across... Chest, thirty-one… Sleeve length, thirty… Waist, twenty six… Hip, thirty-one… Inseam, twenty-eight…"

The woman sticks the pen back in her back pocket and hangs the measuring tape around her neck again, frowning a little as she looks over her measurements while tapping her cheek in thought, "Will said you're twelve, right? You're a little small for your age," at that, Hannibal can't help but blush in embarrassment.

Alana looks up and sees, blushing in embarrassment at herself as she quickly backtracks, "I'm sure you'll catch up though! I mean, even if you don't, your uncle is pretty fit despite wearing slim-fit mediums. I mean, I'm sure..." She trails off, looking down awkwardly.

Will laughs heartily as he looks over at Alana, who is blushing bright red by this point, "Keep digging the hole deeper, Alana, it's amusing," Will looks over to Hannibal with a grin, who smiles a little back.

Alana clears her throat, a slight blush still dusting her cheeks as she turns her attention back to Hannibal, "You're going to want to choose extra-small shirts, slim fit particularly if you prefer shirts to be fitted like your uncle does. Then, your pants will be twenty-six by twenty-eight."

Hannibal nods quietly, looking through the shirts again, calling over his shoulder to the blue eyed man, "Can I pick out what I like, Will? If it'll be worn underneath a black coat, there

won't be any harm in some color, correct?"

Alana raises an eyebrow at his lack of use of 'uncle' before saying Will's name, but doesn't say anything. Will looks over his shoulder at Hannibal, raising an eyebrow at the suggestion of 'color', but nods slowly before saying, "Nothing too crazy, remember what we talked about before."

"Of course, Will," Hannibal says with a pleased smile, waiting for Will to look away again. Once he does, Alana's eyes widen and she has to cover her mouth to hold back a laugh as the preteen starts passing her button down shirts.

The first shirt is a shirt with a cream and brown paisley pattern. Then a satin salmon shirt. Then a cream shirt with a wide but thin brown plaid pattern. Then a navy blue shirt with a grey white and black plaid pattern. Then a maroon gingham patterned shirt. Then a dark grey shirt with a red tartan pattern. Last but not least, a black shirt with salmon pinstripes.

Hannibal and Alana both look over to Will with amused smiles, who is still not paying them attention, before moving onto the pants. Trying not to give himself away, he casually asks, "Black pants, Will?"

"Yes, Hannibal," the man says, as he looks over his shoulder briefly, then does a double take when he notices the shirts in the woman's arms before groaning. He quickly takes on a reprimanding tone, "Hannibal, I thought I told you the aim was to be invisible. How exactly is flashy clothing like that 'invisible'?"

The preteen rolls his eyes, "You also agreed when I said that there wouldn't be any harm in some color, since I'll be wearing a coat."

Alana tries not to smile as she looks between the two, "He's not wrong, Will. I don't see how it hurts. He's just a boy, after all. If you're aiming for invisibility, dressing him up like a bland adult might actually draw more attention anyway."

Hannibal looks happily to Alana, pleased that she was on his side and not Will's. The man sighs in frustration as the door to the boutique opens, throwing his arms up in the air in surrender, "Fine, but you're keeping to plain black pants and coat, understood?"

"But of course, Will," Hannibal says, smiling like a cat that got it's cream.

"Who's that who's driving you up the wall, Will?" An older teenage girl with long dark brown hair and blue eyes asks as she walks behind the counter while taking off her coat, hanging it beside Alana's.

Will turns while smiling fondly at the girl. It's a notably different smile from the polite one he's been giving the boutique owner, which immediately makes Hannibal narrow his eyes in jealousy as he looks at the girl. The older man and the girl walk towards each other quickly to hug, which only makes Hannibal frown more.

"Hey Abigail, how've you been?" Will asks as he pulls away, a hand squeezing her shoulder gently, "I thought your dad made you quit?"

"Oh, he did for a few months. But I kept telling him that I'm not interested in going into the family business, just like you told me. He accepted it, eventually. Then Alana let me come back," the girl said with a smile, looking over to the older woman.

Alana smiles, crossing her arms, "Of course I did, Abigail. You're the most responsible nineteen year old I've ever had work here, even if you're a brat sometimes," she finishes playfully with a wink.

Hannibal looked between the three of them, then stopped on Abigail, tilting his head curiously as he asked, "What does your father do, if you don't mind me asking?"

Will turns and responds before Abigail gets the chance, his eyes meeting Hannibal's, "Her father is one of my coworkers. I've known Abigail since I moved to the city, since she was just a small child."

Hannibal's eyes widened a bit as he quickly looked away, nodding while he blushed a little in embarrassment. Now he realizes that Will's fond smile that he gave the girl earlier was something of a paternal look, "Oh, I see."

"Will, you never said who the kid was," Abigail prods again, looking between the two men in the store. The sandy blonde purses his lips in annoyance at being called a 'kid' by someone so close in age to himself.

"Oh, this is Hannibal, Will's nephew. He's going to be living with Will for now on, so Will wants to get him a new wardrobe," Alana replies for Will, who only nods in confirmation as he smiles cooly at Abigail.

The girl looks at Will for a few silent seconds as Will's eyes narrow. Hannibal's eyes widen as he realizes the girl knows it's a lie, but doesn't know what the truth is either. Abigail suddenly smiles widely and walks back behind the counter, folding her arms on it as she leans forward to look at the sandy haired boy, "Is it because you're going into the family business, Hannibal?"

Will snarls out, "Abigail," while Hannibal looks her dead in the eyes replying, "Yes."

Which, of course, immediately earns a glare from Will as he grinds out from gritted teeth, "Hannibal," who quickly looks down at the rack of pants in front of him. Alana is looking between the three of them, completely out of the loop and confused but remains respectfully quiet as Will reprimands sternly, "For future reference, kid. Don't go around talking about your apprenticeship. Abigail and Alana are smart enough to keep quiet about it so they don't get the both of us, as well as themselves, hurt. Isn't that right, Ms. Bloom and Miss Hobbs?"

Both Abigail and Alana's eyes widen as Will looks coldly between them, both very much aware that what the man had just said was just as much a warning as it was a threat. Alana, unused to seeing this side of Will, nods quickly, "Of course, Will. It's none of my business."

Abigail, on the other hand, was unintimidated, quietly looking between the two men before asking, "So, Jack doesn't know yet, I'm guessing?"

Will steps towards the girl, his eyes still cold. The girl quickly steps back despite the counter between them, Will saying firmly, "Jack will know in time. What's important is that my coworkers, like your father, don't know until after he does. You and I both know how much the others hate competition already as it is."

Abigail purses her lips then nods, looking over to Hannibal as she speaks under her breath, Hannibal's sensitive hearing barely catching what she says, "He's just a kid, Will. You shouldn't be getting him into this world. He could have a life. A long life. A good life."

Will looks away, whispering back, "He's got a darkness growing inside of him, Abigail. Left on his own, it could fester into something worse. If I train him, he might still have a chance."

Hannibal frowns at what they had said, looking back at them. He meets the girl's eyes but she quickly looks away, whispering to Will again, "Just don't let the slimy ones find out about him before you tell Jack."

Will nods quickly, then looks back over at Hannibal and smiles as Abigail walks away to start her daily routine. The sandy blonde can tell the brunette's smile is forced, which only makes the preteen frown more.

"Hannibal?" Alana prompts gently, the boy quickly looking over as the frown slips from his face, "I took the liberty to grab you seven pairs of slim-fit black dress slacks in your size, since you seemed a little distracted. I hope that's alright?"

"Thank you, Ms. Alana, you're wonderful. Will said I also needed a fall coat?" Hannibal asks.

Alana nods with a smile, "Of course, let me just put these shirts and pants over on the counter real quick. I'll be right back!"

The woman quickly walks over to the counter, draping the clothing carefully on the counter before returning. She then guides Hannibal over to the peacoats and helps him to pick out a nice black one, to which he makes a point to choose one that's not slim fit. The woman doesn't question the choice, before guiding him to the shoe section.

Alana helps him pick out a pair of red runners sneakers in his size, then a pair of black leather oxfords. He grabs fourteen pairs of dress socks, but Alana stops him while smiling politely. The boy looks over in confusion as she puts seven pairs back, "I know Will didn't specify which kind of socks to get, but he did say to get seven days worth of dress clothes and workout clothes. I imagine you'll need socks for both."

The woman hands the boy a pack of seven pairs of active-wear, moisture-control socks with a smile, "These are a little pricey as far as ankle socks go, but they're super comfortable when on long runs. You'll thank me, if you're going to be running with Will every morning."

Hannibal looks at them as he takes them then nods, smiling up to her, "Thanks. Workout clothes?"

Alana takes the coat, shoes, and socks from the boy's arms then points over to where Abigail was standing, "That far corner where Abigail is putting out new products has workout wear,

undershirts, underwear, and pyjamas. Just ask her if you need anything."

The preteen nods, walking over to the table of high-quality sweatshirts and sweatpants as Abigail folds clothing she takes out of a large cardboard box before putting it out. Hannibal looks to her out of the corner of his eyes before starting to select some plain grey sets, quietly asking under his breath, "Why don't you want to be a cleaner, Abigail?"

Abigail stops mid-fold and looks at him as he continues selecting sweatshirt and sweatpants sets, before she resumes folding the sweatshirt in her hands. She swallows before she speaks quietly, "Dad wanted to test me, to see if I had it in me to be one. Tricked my boyfriend into coming over one night, under false pretenses. I accidentally gutted him."

Hannibal looked at her quickly, seeing tears in her eyes, "So you don't want to be a cleaner because you hate yourself for killing him?"

She swallows again, tears running down her cheeks before looking at him as she said with a trembling voice, "I don't want to be a cleaner because I loved him, yet it still felt good and powerful killing him."

Hannibal's eyes widen as she looks away, quickly wiping her cheeks. She goes back to folding clothes as the preteen tilts his head in curiosity, saying softly, "Your potential is being wasted here, Abigail."

Abigail looks at Hannibal with sharp eyes and lets out a hollow laugh, replying under her breath again, "You sound like my dad," she looks over to Will, "Be careful around Will. He's a good man, but not always right in the head."

The boy nods, "Thank you," he smiles politely to the older teen then walks over to the undershirts, grabbing seven black and white teeshirts each. The boy then steps over to the underwear, grabbing two packs of seven sets of boxer briefs. Hannibal then looks up at Abigail again, "Pyjamas?"

The girl motions for the boy to turn around with a small smile, Hannibal blinking as he does before laughing when he sees the table full of pyjamas. He quickly grabs seven sets of pyjamas in various colors and patterns, then turns back to the teenager with a grateful smile.

Before he can say anything, she smiles sadly at the ground while tucking a lock of hair behind her ear, "I won't ask why you're doing it, or tell you not to. Just, good luck and take care."

Hannibal nods, "Thanks, Abigail," he then walks up to the front counter with his items, placing them on top of the others. Will walks up beside him with a pair of belts, the preteen noticing as Will puts them atop the pile that they were Hannibal's size. He smiles up to the man then looks over to Alana, who is looking between them expectantly. The sandy blonde says, "I think that's everything, Ms. Alana."

It takes a couple minutes for Alana to ring all of the items up, the total coming to a little over four and a half thousand dollars. Hannibal's mouth falls open in shock at the cost, but Will doesn't bat an eye as he takes out the two envelopes from this morning from his breast

pocket. Hannibal watches as the man takes our the bound stack and breaks the paper tape on it, counting some bills and carefully tucking them into the second envelope before handing the rest of the still-large stack of bills over to Alana, "Double-check it, please."

Alana chuckles, shaking her head as she begins counting the stack of fifty dollar bills, "You're the only customer I have that pays for orders this big in cash. You really should get a bank card, Will. With all this money you keep in your mattress, what if someone breaks into your apartment?" She looks up with a teasing smile.

Will laughs and rolls his eyes, "I hope they're not as good at breaking and entering as you are at multitasking, otherwise I'll be in trouble."

She laughs as she keeps counting for another minute before tapping the stack on the countertop to make it neat, then bends down underneath the counter. Hannibal hears the tell-tale beeps of a digital safe keypad code before a click, then after a moment another click before she stands again with empty hands.

While all this was happening, Abigail had walked over and had folded all of the clothes before and bagged everything into two large bags. She leaves the peacoat out, however, for the preteen to wear out the boutique. Hannibal smiles a bit at her consideration, pulling it over his stained sweater but leaving the coat open so he wouldn't overheat.

The woman hands Will his copy of the receipt, then takes the pen out of her back pocket to write 'direct in safe' on her copy of the receipt before placing it into the drawer. Before closing it, she takes out a few smaller bills and some coins, double-checking the amount before handing it to Will. The man takes the envelope out of his breast pocket again to drop the money in before tucking it away one last time. She smiles at them as she places the pen back in her pocket again, "Don't be a stranger, now. Come back anytime."

The blue eyed man smiles back at Alana and Abigail, before taking both of the large bags and heading to the door. When Hannibal looks back over his shoulder while following Will, Abigail smiles and waves a little. Hannibal looks forward again at the brunette, "Hey, Will?"

The older man holds the door open for the preteen, raising a brow curiously, "Hm?"

"Will you test me one day to see if I have it in me, like Abigail's father did?" Hannibal asks curiously as he walks past before waiting outside for Will. The brunette follows him out, where they begin walking side by side again.

"Don't play dumb, Hannibal, it's unbecoming of you," Will criticizes, "I know you overheard me and Abigail talking, despite us trying to be discreet. Your sharp hearing will either come in handy or get you killed, so be careful."

Hannibal looks up to Will and nods, he then looks ahead again as they continue walking, "You said that I have a darkness inside of me. Tell me, Will; do you want to control it, or set it free?"

Will huffs a laugh as he smirks a bit, looking at the boy from the corner of his eye, "Neither, Hannibal. I want to nurture it, in such a way that you bloom instead of fester."

Chapter End Notes

If there's anything you feel I should add to the tags, please let me know! Thoughts, questions, constructive criticism? Drop me a comment!

Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The pair make their way through the city with empty hands after having dropped the boutique bags of clothing and accessories off at the apartment at Hannibal's insistence, much to Hannibal's relief. When they had originally set out that morning, the boy hadn't considered the possibility of making such a sizable purchase. In hindsight, he's not entirely sure why he hadn't simply asked.

Will leads them to a small local grocery store on the corner of some street in a neighborhood of the city Hannibal is unfamiliar with, once again holding the door open for the boy. Hannibal notices yet again that there is not a metal detector inside the slightly dim store, and after briefly looking around he also doesn't see a single security camera either.

Hannibal goes over to the line of shopping carts by the door, his hands barely having time to wrap around the push bar when he feels a hand on his shoulder. The boy looks back to see Will simply shaking his head as he holds out a black hand basket for the preteen to take.

"We need to be mindful of how much we buy, since we're carrying it home," the brunette says as he grabs his own basket, "We can load them both as much as we please, but that's it."

Hannibal nods, "Good point, I didn't consider that," the boy holds the handles of the basket loosely in front of him, the basket getting bumped forward by his knees as he walks.

Since the preteen is unfamiliar with this store and it's organization, they start in the first aisle. Will follows a step or two behind Hannibal as they go up one side then down the other of every aisle. The boy occasionally grabs something off the shelves, or points out what he wants to Will when it's too high up on the unusually tall shelves.

At first, the preteen had felt embarrassed about not being able to reach everything, but when he noticed Will standing on his tip-toes to reach the top shelf, he felt a little better. Even more so, when he noticed other adult customers struggling with the same issue as well in other aisles. It seemed that what the grocery store lacked in square footage, it attempted to make up for vertically.

As the pair made their way through the store with baskets of increasing weight, Hannibal noticed that the store didn't have any dead tube lights overhead. There weren't even any that were flickering. It seemed that the dimmed lighting throughout the grocer was due to the lack of windows at the front, denying customers natural lighting, and simply the age of the bulbs themselves.

Every now and then, as the pair walked down aisles, there would be a set of bulbs that had clearly been recently replaced. The brightness of these bulbs in the otherwise dimmed store almost made Hannibal's eyes a little sore from looking at them, as they stood out like a sore thumb. For some reason, their occasional inconsistency made Hannibal uneasy.

Eventually, they make their way to the frozen section, to which Will simply puts his free hand on Hannibal's shoulder once again as he guides the boy decidedly past it to the fresh fruits and vegetables. The preteen looks up at the man in confusion, who shrugs, "I don't waste my money on frozen food. It's one thing if it's fresh food I chose to freeze to extend its life, it's another if it's junk food."

The sandy haired boy nods then looks around at the vegetables for a moment, "Fresh produce usually has a maximum fridge life of two weeks. Can we come back before then?"

Will shrugs, "Sure, we can come back every Sunday afternoon if you'd like."

Hannibal raises an eyebrow as he looks curiously to Will before starting to bag some green beans, "Are you religious, Will? Taking off for the Sabbath?

Will laughed as he took the bag of vegetables that Hannibal handed him, placing them into his basket, "I assume most of my clients are, since I so rarely received contracts on Sundays over the years. I eventually told my broker to not offer me that day."

Hannibal nods, looking back to the vegetables as he moves onto bagging some brussel sprouts. Will looks over to the quiet boy curiously, searching the profile of his young face lost in thought before he's handed the bag of produce, "Are you religious, Hannibal?"

The boy's hand pauses for a moment as he grabs a red potato, then picks it up and eyes it as he thinks, "Perhaps abstractly so. More philosophically than spiritually, I think."

Will huffs out a small chuckle as he fondly watches the boy put a few potatoes into a bag before knotting it off and handing it over to the brunette, "You're a weird kid, you know that?"

Hannibal smiles a little at the blue eyed man, "It's okay to be weird, Will," then moves over to the broccoli where he grabs a bag of pre-cut florets and hands it to Will. He then passes over a rubber banded bunch of asparagus spears, and a container of cherry tomatoes that he idly comments under his breath about how it should be over with the fruit.

They then make their way over to the fruit, where Hannibal grabs a hand of near-ripe bananas and hands it to the man. Will carefully drapes it on top of the other produce in his now overflowing basket. The boy then bags up five medium sized pink lady apples, putting them into his own near-full basket. He then turns to Will with a thoughtful look, "Where is the meat section?"

"They actually have a butcher at this grocery store, up by the registers," Will says as he leads the way, motioning for the boy to follow, "We sort of passed nearby when we were in the dairy aisle earlier, but I didn't want to backtrack."

The preteen huffs in frustration but follows after the man. Once they're in front of the case, he looks inside and his chestnut eyes widen in surprise at seeing all of the different unpackaged cuts of offal, poultry, pork, beef, lamb, goat, seafood, and shellfish. The boy blinks a few times, finding himself mildly overwhelmed. He tries to take everything in regardless, though he's not entirely sure where to start or what to do.

"What can I get for you gentlemen?" An older man behind the counter asks with a smile.

Will looks at the preteen for a second from the corner of his eye, then smiles politely back at the man, "We need a few minutes to decide. Thanks."

"Of course, sir. Take all the time you need," the man says before stepping away to resume whatever side duties he had been working on before he noticed them.

The brunette bows his head a little as he speaks softly to Hannibal, "All we need to do is tell him the cut of meat we want and the weight we need. Do you know what it was you intended to cook before we got here? I can figure out everything else from there."

The preteen thinks nervously for a few moments before saying, "One night salmon, two nights chicken thighs, two nights chicken breasts, one night pork loin, and one night of red meat. Steak, maybe? I don't know what kind my parents used to buy, though."

Will nods with a small smile, waving the man over again and ordering with a polite smile. They wait about ten minutes as the man gets the meat for them, wrapping everything first in butcher paper before taping them off. One by one, the man prints out the barcode stickers and labels the packages before handing them off to Will.

The older man carefully puts the meat into Hannibal's basket, placing his own basket down for a brief moment so he can rearrange a couple things in the boy's basket so everything fits, "When we get back, we'll unwrap the meats and put them in containers. They'll expire quickly otherwise."

Hannibal nods as he listens, trying to hold the basket still as Will arranges it. When the man finishes, he stands again as he gives the preteen a smile before nodding towards the registers, "Ready to go?"

The boy nods quietly, then follows the blue eyed man as he leads the way. As they stand shoulder to shoulder while waiting patiently in line behind a few people, Hannibal can't help but look up at the serial killer standinding beside him. He's silently bewildered with how mundane and normal today has been so far, not at all what he had anticipated.

Without looking at the boy, Will chuckles a little as he moves forward in line, starting to put the items from his basket onto the conveyor belt, "It's impolite to stare, kid."

The chestnut eyed boy quickly looks away, blush dusting his cheeks as he joins Will in placing items from his own basket on the belt. He doesn't bother to apologize, "Ms. Bloom had said that you go running in the mornings. Will that be part of our training tomorrow?"

Will puts the last couple items down then waits for Hannibal to finish as well, before handing the preteen his basket and motioning for the boy to look at the end of the belt where there was a small stack of baskets, "Yes. I run eight and a half miles in an hour, but it will be some time before you're able to do that. Have you ever done the mile run at school?"

Hannibal nods, placing their baskets on the stack before looking at Will and saying proudly, "Of course, I can complete it in a few seconds under eight minutes."

Will looks at the preteen with raised brows for a moment, surprised and impressed, as the grocery store clerk begins ringing up their items. The brunette looks back at the clerk and says, "If you can, please bag those in as few paper bags as possible, miss."

The clerk acknowledges Will's request and continues, the blue eyed man looking back at Hannibal, "That's good, kid. You're fast, that might save your life one day. But tomorrow, and going forward, you're aiming for endurance. Not speed."

Hannibal frowned, looking at Will curiously, "So, how fast do you want me to run tomorrow, then?"

The clerk reads out the total for their food, Will taking the envelope out of his breast pocket and handing her the necessary bills. Hannibal notices how Will is mindful to not touch the woman's hand as he passes over the bills, just like with Alana earlier that morning. Alana was careful as well, and did not touch Will in return. The boy notices the immediate distaste on Will's face when the grocery clerk is not careful, however, her skin touching Will's as she hands him the change. He simply grunts in reply instead of giving a verbal thanks

Hannibal blinks in surprise at Will's sudden lapse of manners in the wake of a simple touch. The brunette hands Hannibal the two lighter bags, making sure the boy is holding each with care before scooping up his own two bags. The preteen follows after to the door, where Will backs up in order to hold it open for Hannibal as the boy walks outside in front of him.

The sandy blonde winces a bit as the mid-day sun makes his eyes sting, standing to the side as Will walks over. They start heading back towards the apartment quietly for some time, the noise of the city around them filling the air. It's only when they're stopped at a red light, no one anywhere remotely around them, that Hannibal finally looks over to Will again before asking quietly, "Why don't you like your bare skin being touched, Will?"

Will is quiet for some time, and continues to stay standing there even after the light turns green. The man doesn't look at Hannibal, just keeps staring forward silently, looking lost in thought. Hannibal patiently waits as he looks at Will's profile, the traffic light eventually turning yellow, then red again.

"It's a combination of touch repulsion and touch starvation, I guess," The man finally says, though he seems conflicted for a moment before speaking again, "My brain had wired itself to assume touch as unsafe by the time I was your age, and it never really went away. I feel more capable of my abilities to protect myself, so I don't panic at contact like I did when I was younger, but I still avoid it whenever possible."

Will finally looks at the boy with an apologetic smile, as if he had done something wrong by answering Hannibal's question. He looks forward again as the light turns green and finally resumes steps forward into the street. They resume their treck home, Hannibal walking alongside the man. The sandy blonde and the brunette are both comfortably silent the rest of the way home.

They made their way up the front steps, and another resident of the building happened to step outside as they reached the door. The woman politely holds the door open for them, Will

thanking her with a smile as they pass. The pair quietly make their way up the stairwell, Hannibal looking at the taped off door of his old apartment quietly as they walk past.

When they get to Will's apartment, the man kneels down carefully to place his bags down on the ground before taking his keys out, unlocking both the knob and deadbolt before pushing the door open. He kneels down again and carefully scoops back up his bags, leading them both into the apartment.

Hannibal pushes the door shut with his shoulder before following Will into the kitchen, watching as the man's places his bags on the countertops then does the same with his own. The brunette looks down to him with a small smile, "Since you said you wanted to cook, I'll let you cook dinners for now on. Breakfast is still my responsibility however, since we'll be pressed for time. You can reorganize my fridge and pantry however you'd like, though. I'll figure it out where everything is when you're done."

Hannibal's face lit up with a smile at being able to reorganize Will's kitchen, which currently had sparse in it to begin with so wasn't very organized. The older man walked back into the living room to the front door, bolting the deadbolt. He then slips his glasses off and folds them with one hand as he walks over to the table, taking his envelopes with money out of his breast pocket before dropping his glasses in the pocket.

The blue eyed man hears something drop on the floor and looks over curiously, then huffs out a laugh when he sees Hannibal has climbed up to kneel on the countertops in order to reach the food on the top shelf. The boy looks back over his shoulder at Will in exasperation, "I think everything up here is expired, Will."

"Don't use that shelf, then. Obviously I don't actively use it myself," Will says with a laugh as he unties the sash before unbuttoning his peacoat. Hannibal huffs and looks forward again, gathering everything from that shelf in one arm before carefully climbing down and dropping it into the trash.

With a lingering smile, the man slips off his peacoat and hangs it on the usual chair before he begins the routine of removing his weapons. Soon enough, he's shutting the case to the right before sliding off his harnesses to lay in their neat pile on the table. Once he's done, he wanders over to the kitchen again, crossing his arms in front of himself as he leans against the doorway dividing the rooms.

Hannibal feels Will's eyes on him before he actually hears the man, looking back over to the man with a small smile as he picks up the many bottles of different spices to cradle in one of his arms. The boy looks back at the bag again as he picks up the last few bottles then begins putting them into the first shelf of the pantry, in the corner closest to the stove, "Do you have any requests for our first dinner together, Will?"

Will shrugged a bit, "I'm indifferent, though I imagine the salmon will go bad the quickest, so that might be a good idea."

The preteen nods as he opens up the packages of meats and puts them in plastic containers before putting them into the fridge, then throws out the butcher paper pile. He continues putting most of the food away in both the pantry cabinet and the fridge, taking out a mixing

bowl from another cabinet for the fruit. He places the hand of bananas into the bowl and unbags the apples, placing them inside as well. He places the folded paper bags under the bowl, not sure what else to do with them for now.

Hannibal looks over to the clock on the stove and sees that it's still only half past two in the afternoon, much too early to start dinner yet. Will notices the perplexed look on the boy's face and tilts his head, "Why don't we put your clothing away? I have more than enough hangers in the closet for your shirts and pants, and I should be able to condense my dresser to open up some drawers for you."

The preteen looks over to Will and blushes a little at the idea of their clothes being kept together, "Of course."

Will notices the look on the preteen's face and rolls his eyes as he walks over to the boutique bags by the front door and picks them up, taking them with him as he makes his way down the hall. Hannibal follows after the man quietly, watching as the brunette places the bags on the bed.

"You can start with taking the retail tags off of everything while I make room in the dresser," Will said as he turned to the dresser in question as he continued talking, "They're going to be safety pins you'll have to unclip instead of the plastic fasteners punched into the fabric that you're probably used to."

Hannibal nods a little and starts taking everything out of the bags one by one, placing everything into organized piles. After all of the clothing, shoes, and belts were out on the bed in neat piles, Hannibal started to look for the safety pinned tags that Will had spoken about. The boy blinks when he finds it pinned on the tag of the first shirt, as everything about it screams decadence and care.

The black matte coiless safety pin is half an inch long, with a thin maroon ribbon looped through that ties into a small careful bow. On the ribbon, there's a piece of black thick cardstock with a hand-printed label detailed in metallic gold ink that details the boutique's name and some lines underneath. On the lines, someone has hand-written the details of the shirt and it's price in silver metallic ink.

The preteen quickly looks away from the tag as he blushes in embarrassment, having never imagined someone would have ever spent so much money on a single piece of clothing for him. He looks at the pile of clothes on the bed quietly for a moment, feeling both gratitude and discomfort washing over him in waves. So lost in his emotions, he almost doesn't hear Will call his name the second time, looking over to the man.

"Everything okay, kid? You look lost in thought," The brunette asks as he walks over, his arms folded, "I finished with the dresser, if you're done."

"Ah, not quite. I was distracted, I apologize," Hannibal looks down at the pin and quickly unclicks it, slipping it out of the label before clicking it shut and dropping it back into the bag.

Will notices that it was the first shirt Hannibal had done but didn't say anything, simply picking up one of the pairs of pants from it's pile and starts to remove their pinned tags. The two of them work together quietly through the clothing, making quick work of the tags. Will then carefully unties the ribbons from inside both pairs of shoes and belts, while Hannibal opens the packs of socks and underwear.

The older man reaches over in front of Hannibal and takes the stack of shirts from the boy. The preteen watches as the brunette drapes the shirts carefully over one arm as he walks over to the left side of the closet, opening it before hanging them to the left side of his own shirts. One by one, he hangs each shirt quietly with care.

While Will is working on that, Hannibal walks over to the dresser. There are eight drawers in the dresser, and Hannibal opens the left top drawer to find it empty. The preteen goes back over to the bed to scoop up his piles of underwear and socks, returning to the dresser to neatly fill the drawer with them. The underwear on one side of the drawer with the socks on the other side, dress socks lined up behind the athletic socks.

The boy returns to the bed to scoop up his undershirts as Will is draping Hannibal's dress pants over his arm. The sandy blonde watches the blue eyed man walk over to the right side of the closet, opening it before starting to hang the pants draped in half on hangers. Hannibal takes the undershirts and walks over to the dresser, closing the now-filled top drawer before opening the one below it. He starts filling it with his neatly folded shirts, putting black on one side and white on the other.

Hannibal returns to the bed again for his sweatpants and sweatshirts, bringing them over to start putting them into the third drawer down neatly. While he was busy putting the last few pairs in, he didn't notice as Will walked up beside him silently. The boy looked over and blinked in surprise as the man simply handed him the first set of pyjamas with a small smile.

"I think we had the same placement ideas for our clothes, funnily enough," the older man says as Hannibal takes the clothing.

The boy smiles before opening the bottom drawer, starting to fill it, "I'm not sure why you're surprised, Will. They do say that great minds think alike, after all."

That earns the boy a laugh from the man as the preteen finishes up before closing the drawer. The sandy blonde then looks over to the clock and sees that it's quarter to five now and smiles, looking back at Will, "Do you want to keep me company while I cook, Will?"

The man raises an eyebrow as he grabs the bag with the tags and pins in it, walking over to the doorway, "Don't you mean help you?"

Hannibal chuckles, "You can help, if you'd like. Though I don't mind if you just keep me company. That's more what I'm used to, anyway."

Will's eyes soften in realization as he nods a little, "Sounds good, then."

The two of them make their way down the hallway and through the living room, Will hanging back to allow Hannibal to go into the kitchen. The preteen rolls his sweater's sleeves

up before starting to wash his hands, the brunette leaning back against the door frame leading into the kitchen.

Will watches as Hannibal takes out ingredients, spices, and cookware. The man smiles slightly as he notices the preteen had intentionally left the top two shelves of the pantry empty. The kitchen is quiet as the boy goes about preparing the food.

"You can talk while I cook, if you'd like," the sandy blonde says as he turns on the burner after putting a pan on it, putting some butter in it.

Will smiles a bit, "I didn't want to distract you."

Hannibal chuckles as puts a pot of broccoli florets on the stove, waiting for the pan to be the perfect temperature for the salmon, "When Mischa was little, she would insist on standing between my legs as she babbled on nonsense I couldn't understand. You cannot distract me."

Will laughs, "No, I suppose not," the brunette smiles softly at the nostalgic fondness on the boy's face as he continues cooking, "You sound like you started cooking young."

Hannibal nods, placing the salmon filets into the pan carefully with the spatula, "Mamma was content leaving the three of us with cereal every night, and Bedelia didn't like cooking. As soon as I could see over the stove without standing on something, I started cooking hot food for the two of us."

The blue eyed man nods as the boy stirs the broccoli, "That's a long time to be taking care of yourself and your baby sister."

The boy was reaching for the spatula but paused, then smiled sadly to Will, "In fact, it was immediately after Mamma went back after maternity leave that I started cooking. The first time I used the stove was to heat the tea kettle, to dip Mischa's bottle in the water. She was crying because Bedelia gave it to her cold."

Will frowned as Hannibal looked away for a moment. The boy then sighed and flipped the salmon, the side that had been on the pan previously having a beautiful butter sear to it. The man rubs the back of his neck then decides to get out plates for Hannibal, putting them on the counter. He then grabs utensils and two cups, taking them to the table and places them down.

The man returns to the kitchen as Hannibal is plating the food, going over to the sink to get two glasses of water. He then stops by the fridge to get the milk before bringing it and the glasses to the table, sitting the water down before pouring the milk in the other glasses already at the table.

Hannibal walks over with the plates and sets the food down at each of their seats before sitting. Will pulls back his chair and sits as well, picking up his fork and starting to eat as the preteen watches. As soon as he starts chewing, his mouth is flooded with flavor and he can't help but moan softly.

"I'll take that you enjoy it," Hannibal says with a smile as he gathers some salmon on his own fork before taking a bite.

Will nods, chuckling as he swallows before taking a small drink of water, "It's fantastic, Hannibal. You just muddled with cooking on your own?"

Hannibal laughs, "You're just saying that because you ate canned soup and lunch meat every day for over a decade."

The brunette shakes his head as he chews another bite before swallowing again, "This is even better than Ms. Pimms' cooking when I was a kid."

The boy blushes a little as he smiles down to his plate, "Thank you, Will," he eats a floret of broccoli, then looks up at the man, "I liked the cookbooks at the school library. Picked up some things."

The two of them finish eating in silence, Hannibal quickly stacking the plates, cups, and silverware before disappearing into the kitchen. Will watches him go then hears the sound of the boy beginning to wash everything, turning to look at his aglaonema in the window.

Will walks over and picks the pot up carefully before closing the window with the other hand. The man then walks over and sits at the table, placing the plant down in front of himself. He grabs the spray bottle and cloth, starting his routine of caring for its leaves. As he's almost finished, he hears the water turn off in the kitchen before Hannibal walks back into the room.

"Does it have a name?"

Will blinked then looked up at Hannibal, a little confused, "I'm sorry?"

"Your plant. You seem to care a lot about it. Did you name it?" the boy asks as he walks over and sits at the table, reaching out to feel one of its leaves.

Will looks back at the aglaonema and tilts his head in thought for a moment, then huffs a small laugh, "Winston. Definitely Winston."

Hannibal looks at the man with a raised brow as Will sprays and wipes the last few leaves. When the man finishes, he pushes the potted plant carefully to the back corner of the table. Hannibal tilts his head curiously, his arms folded on the table, "Was there a Winston in your past that you were fond of?"

Will shrugs a little as he sits back in his seat, crossing his arms as he looks over at Hannibal, "Something like that."

Accepting that Will wasn't going to indulge him further, the boy rests his chin on his forearms, "So how does tomorrow go? Is there a plan, or are we just taking things as we go?"

The brunette shakes his head with a small smile, waving a hand as if shooing away a fly, "Absolutely a plan, spontaneity is not an option in the mornings. You'll turn the alarm clock on tonight before bed, and it will go off at three am."

Hannibal pouts then huffs, "Why do we have to wake up so early?"

Will rolls his eyes, continuing, "We'll start with an hour run, then we'll move onto exercises. I'll figure out what weights you'll use, how many repetitions you'll do, and how many sets you can endure in a few minutes."

The preteen blinked and sat up straight, confused, "I thought you said we start tomorrow?"

Will nodded, "We do, but if I don't teach you the exercises as well as figure out your ability and endurance levels ahead of time, we'll run late to my daily meeting with my broker."

"When do we have to be at your broker's?" Hannibal asks, a curious gleam in his eyes.

The blue eyed man huffs a laugh, "I have to be at my broker's at six am. You will wait outside for now. I'll explain the situation to him tomorrow, and introduce you to him the following day."

The boy frowns, "Why can't I simply go inside to meet him tomorrow?"

The brunette shakes his head again, then looks Hannibal in the eyes, gesturing his open palm out to the boy, "That's not how apprenticeships work in this business. If Jack finds out you haven't been shadowing me for a month before introducing you, he'll personally pay one of the other scum working under him to kill you while we're asleep."

Hannibal purses his lips for a moment before speaking, "So I'll have been in your care for a month and two days when I meet Jack, then?"

Will barks a laugh, rubbing his mouth as he nods, "Sure, that will work. Now, go get changed into workout clothes and come back to the living room when you're done."

The sandy blonde quickly gets up and heads down the hallway, going into the bedroom and shutting the door behind himself. He pulls his sweater over his head then sits on the edge of the bed, unlacing his sneakers and taking them off. The boy tucks them under the nightstand before standing, unbuttoning his jeans and slipping them off.

The preteen walks over to the dresser and pulls out the third drawer to take out a sweatshirt and sweatpants, slipping both on. He then grabs his jeans and sweater and goes to drop them in the hamper in the corner of the room but hesitates, realizing he hadn't asked Will if it was okay to mix their clothes together or not. Instead, he opts for folding his old clothes and lays them on top of the dresser before going back into the living room.

Will is standing by the open coat closet with his back to the boy when he re-enters the living room. Hannibal tilts his head curiously as the man turns to face him, four kettlebells of various weights in his hands. The brunette walks over, putting the kettlebells on the ground in front of the couch before moving the chairs out of the way.

He then walks past Hannibal and down the hallway to the bedroom, soon returning with door frame pull-up clamps. The blue eyed man attaches the clamps to the frame between the kitchen and the living room, then stands beside the table as he looks at the preteen expectantly for a moment.

"Your exercises are going to include burpees, goblet squats, push ups, and then pull ups. You'll do five sets," Will says, "You only want to do them as fast as you can do them right; if your form fails, you might as well have not done it at all. Or worse, you're potentially hurting yourself. You will only do as many reps as you can complete in the time it takes for me to complete my own sets."

Hannibal frowns, "That all sounds like there is opportunity for variability."

Will nods, "There will be, for you. You will be learning your own body's ability and endurance levels. I know how long it takes for me to complete a set, so I will stop you when the time comes. Then you move on to the next exercise, and eventually as your strength grows you'll be able to do more until you level out."

The boy smiles a bit in excitement, "How do we start?"

The brunette chuckles, motioning over to the door, "Put your running sneakers on, first. It'll give you better traction with the floor throughout the workout. Then I'll show you how to do a burpee."

Hannibal looks over to the door to see his sneakers beside Will's, much to his surprise, seeing how he didn't remember the man bringing them into the room. He quickly goes over and sits by the door, putting them on and lacing them up before standing again. The boy walks back over to the brunette and looks at him expectantly.

The man then proceeds to show him a burpee at his own normal speed, which he immediately tells Hannibal he doesn't expect the boy to be able to keep up with when he sees his slack face of surprise. The blue eyed man then goes through it a second time, slowly, explaining each step and position as he goes. The third time, he tells Hannibal to attempt to do it with him-- to Will's pleasant surprise, the boy does a pretty good job.

After that, Will has Hannibal continue to attempt a set of nine more burpees, correcting his postures as needed as the boy goes. Will notices that even the first position of the eighth repetition was a bit sloppy so immediately stops Hannibal, who looks up to him in confusion as his breathing is a bit labored.

"You're focusing too much on getting the set done rather than doing them right. You did nine, that's good enough. We're moving on," Will says simply, before handing the preteen an eighteen pound kettlebell.

Will positions the boy's hands on the handle of the kettlebell then has the boy stand in a relaxed position for a goblet squat. He then stands beside him while holding one of the other kettlebells and shows him how to do it once, then on the second repetition tells him what exactly he should be doing and feeling. On the third repetition, Hannibal joins in, minding his form as he mimics Will nearly perfectly.

The brunette then stands back as the sandy blonde continues to do three more goblet squats before Will stops him and hands him a twenty-six pound weight instead, saying quietly, "Try that one on for size."

Hannibal frowns as he does the next squat, finding it more difficult with the additional weight. He does two more before Will stops him completely, taking the weight and putting it on the floor, "We'll use that weight for your exercises."

Will then paused and looked at the preteen, "I don't want to offend you, but I have to ask because I don't want to waste time tomorrow correcting you. Do you know how to do push ups?"

The boy nods and gets down to the ground to do a push up, but doesn't lower himself low enough to the ground. Will kneels down beside him and pushes his back gently down again, making the boy look over at him curiously as he lowers himself until his elbows are at about a ninety degree angle, making the boy frown. Will nods then, "This is why I asked. The first time your posture was fine, but you didn't go even close to low enough."

Will removes his hand and lets the boy back up, helping him get up, "You'll do push ups while I do pull ups, and pull ups while I do push ups."

Hannibal frowned, "Why the trade off?"

The man laughed, "First, I only have one set of pull up clamps and don't want to buy a second set. Second, you're already going to be doing burpees, you'll get tired quickly if you do too many push ups afterwards. Besides, the extra time for pull ups will benefit you in the long run."

The preteen nods and looks over to the handles hanging from the door frame and goes over to them, gripping them in his hands nervously before pulling himself up. Will watches with a small smile as he folds his arms, walking over to the boy as he slowly lowers himself before pulling himself up again. After the third pull up, Will nods, "That's enough. You did good. Your form was perfect, I'm confident you'll be fine with them tomorrow."

Hannibal lowers himself to the ground and lets go of the handles, looking away as he blushes with a small smile, "Thank you, Will."

The brunette nods towards the hallway, "I know it's only quarter past eight, but you should shower up and get some sleep. Waking up at three in the morning takes some getting used to. There's towels and washcloths in the closet next to the bathroom."

The sandy blonde nods, walking over to the front door and sits on the floor. He takes off his sneakers and sits them beside Will's, then gets up and makes his way to the opening of the hallway and pauses, turning to look back at Will, "Hey, can I put my dirty clothes in your hamper?"

Will looks over with raised eyebrows, caught off guard by the question, but nods, "Yeah, of course. I'll be getting changed out here and sleeping on the couch until I can get us a bigger place."

Hannibal hesitates, blushing a little, "You can stay in the bed, too, if you want. There's enough room. The couch doesn't look very comfortable."

Will clears his throat awkwardly and looks away, rubbing the back of his neck as his other hand sits on his hip, "I'll be fine, thanks. You should hurry on to your shower, we have to be up early."

The boy nods and quickly makes his way down the hall, pulling open the bottom drawer to take out a set of pyjamas then the top drawer for underwear. He closes both drawers before heading to the hallway closet, opening it to grab both towel and washcloth. The preteen then closes the closet and goes into the bathroom, shutting the door behind himself.

The brunette waits in the living room with his arms folded as he listens carefully to the sounds of Hannibal moving about the apartment. Once he hears the sound of the shower start, he makes his way down the hallway to the bedroom and gets out a fresh set of underwear and undershirt. While he's there, he also grabs tomorrow morning's workout clothes. He brings them all to the living room and changes quickly into the fresh underclothes.

Listening again to the sound of the shower, the man decides to take today's dirty clothes and make his way quickly down the hall to the bedroom and drop them into the hamper. He then goes back to the living room and sits on the couch with a sigh, placing his work out clothes on the end table beside the old radio. The brunette reaches over to the clock and turns on it's alarm, already set for three am, before laying on his back on the couch with his arms behind his head.

About ten minutes later, he hears the bathroom door open and soft footsteps coming down the hall. Will looks over to see Hannibal in his pyjamas, his hair slightly damp as he stands in the hall doorway. The man raises a brow, "Everything okay?"

Hannibal nods, "Just wanted to say goodnight."

Will softens and nods, "Night, kid. Don't forget about the alarm clock."

"Of course," the preteen says with a smile before turning back around. As he starts down the hallway, he hears a click and the light from the lamp in the living room disappears, leaving him in the darkness as he walks into the bedroom. Hannibal climbs into bed and pulls the blankets over himself before picking up the clock, feeling around it until he feels it's alarm switch. He flips it before setting the clock back down on the nightstand, then snuggles up into the bed.

It only takes a few minutes before sleep claims him.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry about the delay in posting! First I had writer's block for a week, then I was traveling out of state for five days! I promise the slice-of-life mood that this chapter and the last had is moving on, too. I'll try to get the next chapter out quickly! If there's anything you feel I should add to the tags, please let me know! Thoughts, questions, constructive criticism? Drop me a comment!

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!